Newly Translated from **Internationale Situationniste** No.5

Open Creation And its Enemies

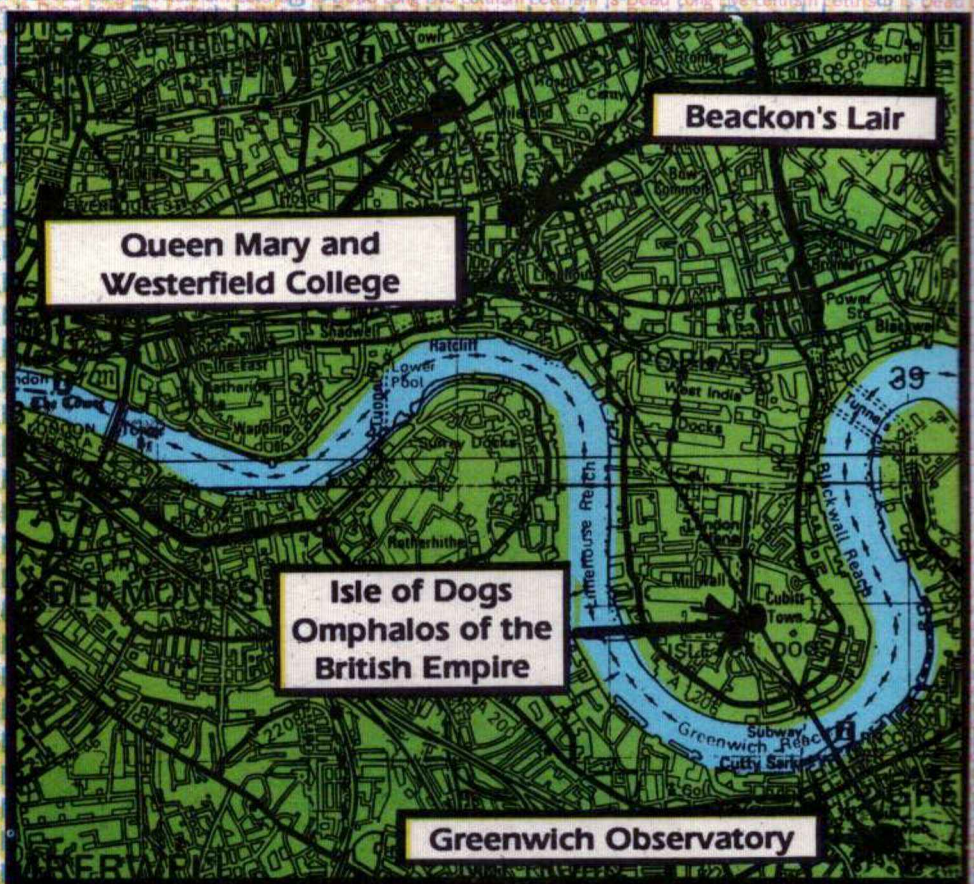
by

Asger Jorn

Coming soon!

— An English Hacienda

Recent research by the ***London Psychogeographical Association*** *has shed light on Ivan Shcheglov's plea that* ***"The Hacienda must be built"*** *(***Formulary for a New Urbanism****, 1953). Over three hundred years ago such a project was put into operation in what is now South East London. Located at the site where Sir Walter Raleigh used his cloak to cover a puddle for Queen Elizabeth I, this architectural innovation was commissioned in 1616, the year that* **The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz** *was published. This text explores its role in a scheme to seize control of the world!*



Open Creation and its Enemies

with

Originality and Magnitude

(on the system of Isou)

by

Asger Jorn

translated from the French texts

appearing in

Internationale Situationniste

No.s 4 & 5 (1960)

Translated by Fabian Tompsett

The English Edition

Published by

Unpopular Books

London

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The English Edition is essentially the same as that published by the *London Psychogeographical Association* in Alba on the Summer Solstice 1993. This was the twentieth anniversary of the Commemoration of Jorn's life organised by his friends in Denmark, 1973. Jorn had died the preceeding Beltane. This edition has been furnished with a new more extensive introduction and an appendix featuring the *Manifesto* which appeared in *Internationnale Situationniste* No. 4

January 1994

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Preface to the English Edition

These texts were first published in English by the *London Psychogeographical Association* at Calanais, Alba on 21st June 1993. This was the twentieth anniversary of the Asger Jorn commemoration organised by his friends in Denmark.This was following Jorn's death on May 1st 1973. His friends travelled by river boat with the jazz band playing as the solstice fires burnt on the shore. Twenty years later the *LPA* huddled around a solstice fire with a small band of intrepid adventurers.

The LPA was only able to produce fifty copies of the first Calanais edition of this text as their baggage was already over-loaded with camping gear. With minor textual changes this is basically the same text. Unpopular Books has undertaken to publish this booklet on a much broader basis. The reader will soon appreciate that this text contributes substantially to the theoretical developments which the LPA has been making.

These two texts constitute two of the five texts by Asger Jorn (1914-1973) which appeared in Situationniste Internationale, the central bulletin edited by the sections of the Situationist International. Of the other three, there is bowdlerised translation of *"Les Situationnistes et l'Automation"* (No.1, June 1958) in Situationist International Anthology edited by Ken Knabb (1981). *"La Fin de l'Économie et la Réalisation de l'Art"* (No.4, June 1960) is an extract from the pamphlet *"Critique de la Politique Économique"* which was published in the series *"Rapports présentés a l'I.S."*. Unpopular Books hopes to see this published shortly. The final text *"La pataphysique, un Religion en Formation"* (No.6, August 1961) appeared as *"Pataphysics, a religion in the Making"* in *Smile* (No.11, 1989).

At the third session of the Central Council of the Situationist International (Munich, 11-3 April 1963) Jorn's resignation was "accepted in respect of various personal circumstances which henceforth made it extremely difficult for him to participate in the organised activity of the S.I.". Guy Atkins however says he was told by Ralph Rumney that Jorn remained a 'clandestine' member. (see *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years 1954-64*, p 55). Jorn certainly continued to supply Debord with pictures, which were sold to cover the printing bills. It has even been suggested that the SI was only dissolved after Jorn's death meant that this source of funds had dried up.

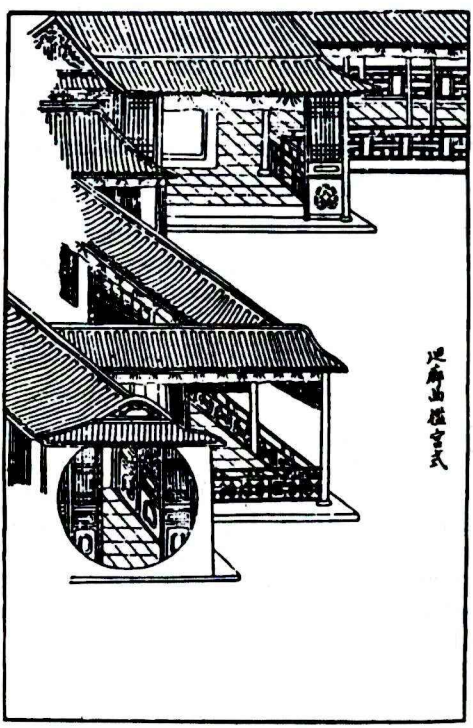
Within a year of Jorn officially resigning, the S.I. had split: there was a faction in Paris, centred around Bernstein, Debord and Vaniegem. they kept the name of the S.I. Nash, Elde, de Jong, Lindell, Larsson and Strid set up the 2nd Situationist

International, based at 'Drakkabygget' ('Dragon's Lair'), Nash's farm in Sweden. Jorn supported both internationals for a while, and many will see the split foretold in his remark that "the field of situlogical experience is divided into two opposed tendencies, the ludic tendency and the analytical tendency, the tendency of art, spinn and the game, and that of science and its techniques". But Jorn goes on to add that "it is the creative side which precedes the analytical side". (See below page 38. For a discussion of the split see Stewart Home's *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War*,London 1988).

Getting things in perspective

"Perspective is nothing else than seeing a place (sito) behind a pane of glass, quite transparent, on the surface of which the objects which lie behind the glass are to be drawn. They can be traced in pyramids to the point in the eye and these pyramids are intersected by the glass pane."

Leonardo da Vinci



from *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, by Jên-wu, 1679

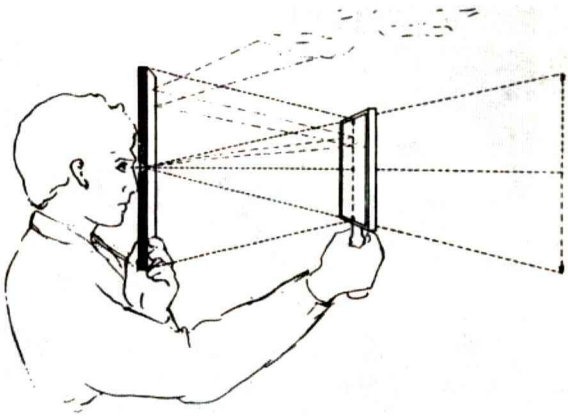
The scientific system of perspective involves a pyramid culminating in an eye. However, Jorn's interpretation of Isou's megalomania, which is a perspective running through time, involves an 'I' in a pyramid. Jorn however must be criticised for getting different perspectives mixed up. Chinese Perspective is a parallel perspective (see illustration from the book of Jên-wu, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1679). Here parallel lines are drawn parallel rather than leading to a vanishing point. His illustration is an inverted perspective, which was common in pre-renaissance Europe (see *Last Judgement* from *The Book of Pericopes*.) This later perspective is related to Euclidean notions of vision, where the eye was seen as an active organ, projecting rays of sight. The development of scientific perspective was a reversal of this, whereas Chinese parallel perspective was an attempt at balance. The subject can rove freely through space.

The reversal of perspective achieved by the renaissance was a part of the overall change in western ideography. Instead of an internalised world and externalised God, the *New Philosophy* imposed an externalised world and an internalised God. Theology becomes a privatised affair, a matter for personal conscience, while the 'external world' (in fact a cultural creation of the renaissance) is treated as an object, governed by 'natural laws' either intrinsic to nature, or imposed by a deus ex machina (depending on theological taste). This fiction then allowed social questions to be screed by gazing into the calm water of scientific analysis.

Last Judgement
from *The Book of Pericopes.*

Thus Newton's protégé, Samuel Clarke, took up the view that universal gravitation is a Divine energy manifesting God's presence in the world. This control of 'brute and stupid' matter by God's spiritual presence was used to justify the subjection of the people from the lower walks of life to the judgements of their superiors. The social order is pictured as another product of Divine providence, where revolt is against nature, condemned for being both immoral and impossible (See *Witch-hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy*, Brian Easlea, Brighton 1980). This is then enshrined in conservative philosophy, whereby as revolt is 'unnatural' it can only be explained by the deceit of evil manipulators who simply seek power within the terms of current society.

The imposition of science is presented by bourgeois historians a natural coming of age, as an emancipation of humanity through reason. As the twentieth century has worn on, such a liberal-humanist view has become increasingly untenable. The development of the *New Philosophy*, through art (and particularly perspective), astronomy and mathematics all involved the relativisation of individual consciousness. The *subject* of bourgeois social theory was born. Spatial realism in art was a move away from the flatness of the middle ages. The town and the town-house became the ambience of the renaissance artist.



From *Studi su la dolce Prosettiva* (Allessandro Parronchi 1964 illustrating Brunelleschi's technique with a mirror

In fourteenth century Sienna, many artists introduced tiled floors into their designs - "Two early examples may be compared from Duccio's *Maesta* of 1311 *(Opera del Duomo, Siena)*: the scene representing *Christ amongst the Doctors* has a floor whose squares are barely foreshortened, while the *Temptation of Jesus on the Temple* displays a strip of chequered floor that leads the eye deep into the interior of the building." (*Oxford Book of Art*, p859). In the early fifteenth century Brunelleschi developed a technique using mirrors to fix a point of vision and so create the illusion of spatial reality.

While Brunelleschi can be regarded as the originator of the first construction of scientific perspective, the bifocal perspective which Jorn refers to was a subsequent development from Giotto's workshop. Jorn also points to Bjerke-Petersen's perspective - "mystical outlook of the identity of past-present-future". Jorn suggests this is typically Scandinavian, yet anyone who has visited the Summer House at *Edzell Castle* can see on display there a sixteenth century carved oak panel which depicts an amalgamated face that simultaneously looks to the left, to the right and straight ahead. This is done using a single pair of eyes. This can be located firmly in the Hermetic renaissance tradition, and is comparable to the fifteenth century Florentine relief *The Three Faces of Prudence* which is on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This depiction of Prudence is directly related to the neoplatonic understanding of time as demonstrated by Cicero's *De inventione* where past-present-future are compared with memoria-intelligentia-providentia. (In the *Art of Memory* Frances Yates has expanded on the importance of this in the emergence of renaissance hermeticism.)

For Jorn the use of time as the dimension of perspective comes from his view that:

> *"For man, time is nothing other than a succession of phenomena at an observation point in space, while space is the order of co-existence of phenomena in time, or progression."*
>
> *Time is change which is only conceivable as a form of progressive movement in space, whereas equally space can only be conceived of as stable through the participation of movement. Neither space nor time possess any reality outside*

change, progression, which is to say outside the active combination of space-time. The action of space-time is progression, and this progression is itself the change of time into space and the change of space into time.

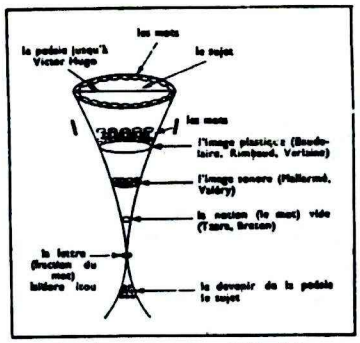
Thus we see that the qualitative increase, or the resistance to change, is due to quantitative increase. They work together. It is this goal which is the goal of socialist progress: the increase of quality through the increase of quantity. And it allows for this double increase is inevitably identical to the decrease of value, of space-time. This is what reification is.

Three Faces of Prudence Fifteenth century Florentine relief, V&A Museum London

The magnitude which determines value is space-time, whether imminent or incidental. The space-time which is reserved for the existence of the human race on the earth shows it value in incidents. No incidents, no history. The space-time of a human life is private property. This is the great discovery of Marx from the perspective of human liberation. But it is at the same time the point of departure of the errors of the Marxists, as a property must only become value through being realised, through being liberated, through being used. In this way space-time of a human life is given a reality by its variability. And the individual is made a social value by their variability of behaviour in relation to everybody else. If this variability has become private, excluded from social valorisation, as is the case in authoritarian socialism, the space-time of man becomes unrealisable. Thus the private character of human qualities (hobbies) has become an even greater devalorisation of human life than the private ownership of the means of production, since in determinist socialism that which is useless doesn't exist. Instead of abolishing the private character of property, socialism can only increase it to the extreme, rendering mankind itself useless and socially non-existent.

The goal of artistic development is the liberation of human values, through the transformation of human qualities into real values. It is at this point that the artistic revolution against socialist development commences, the artistic revolution which is linked to the communist project."

from *"La Fin de l'Économie et la Réalisation de l'Art"* (S.I. No.4, June 1960)



Isou's Amplic and Chiselling phases as illustrated in his theoretical work *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et une nouvelle musique, 1947*

Lettrism, Isou and Lemaître

At this point we are obliged to quickly cover Isou's concept of Lettrism: each art goes through a period of growth (the amplic phase) and then decline (the chiselling phase). The former is characterised by "pretexts exterior to the art itself: anecdotes (battles, epics, divine struggles), sentiments (romantic) or ideas (philosophical, social etc.)" (*What is Lettrism?* by Maurice Lemaitre, *Ur* No.3 second series 1952). The latter phase "is the period in which the art turns upon itself and changes its vision from external goals to goals of internal arrangement, proper to the art itself (...)It is the period of the concentration of means and elements to the detriment of the 'story'" (ibid.)

Isou placed Victor Hugo at the point of highest amplitude for poetry, and thus could historicise himself as culminating the chiselling phase started by Baudelaire. In music, he located Debussey as the inaugurator of the chiselling phase, and Monet in painting. Isidore Isou thus becomes the eye of the needle through which poetry must pass to realise its future. In 1945 Isou had arrived in Paris from Romania. He had made the journey in order to present his ideas which he had worked on in his teens. His irreverence, ability to organise artistic interventions and a capacity for grandiose self-historicisation enabled him to project himself into Parisian cultural life.

He promoted himself as a messiah, that he could become a God through creating a new art. Amongst the followers he attracted there were those who learnt from his techniques of media manipulation but were bored by his megalomania. In 1952 he had an opportunity to present the Lettrist movement in public at the Odéon Theatre, Paris. His poetic ideas exhausted, all that was left for him to do was spend two hours slagging everyone else of as plagiarists, ersatz rubbish. (See *Limitations of Lettrisme, An Interview with Henri Chopin* in *Lettrisme: Into the Present*, 1983) While some poets went of to develop their careers elsewhere, a group attracted by his political techniques broke away to form the *Lettrist International*. In 1957 this joined forces with Jorn's *International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus* and the non-existent *London Psychogeographical Association* to form the Situationist International. Thus Jorn's attack on Isou and his acolyte Lemaître was away of distancing the SI from its Lettrist roots.

In *Originality and Magnitude*, Jorn starts by picking up on a row between Isou and the Ultra-Lettrists of *Grâmmes*, a review founded by François Dufrêne and Robert Estivals in 1958. Dufrêne, a former lettrist was close to Gil Wolman who

"had played an important part in the organisation of the lettrist left in 1952, and then in the foundation of the Lettrist International" (*Potlatch* 28, 22 May 1956). Wolman was a delegate to the Congress of Alba, but was expelled six months before organisational unity was achieved. The Ultra-Lettrist split came not simply from a rejection of Isou's megalomania, but also a desire to move from working with letters to manipulating sound and meaning.

"Open Creation"

Following the Alba Congress (2-8th September 1956), Jorn announced that the *IMIB* had abandoned all efforts at pedagogical action — the direct transfer of artistic gifts is impossible — in favour of experimental activity; "artistic adaptaion takes place through a series of contradictory phases: Stupefaction — Wonder —Imitation — Rejection — Experience — Possession. None of these phases can be avoided, although they need not all be gone through by one individual". (*Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus* in *Situationist International Anthology* ed. Ken Knabb 1983).

In 1958 Jorn was invited by the Danish Arts foundation to make a large ceramic mural for a new secondary school in Århus. He had been angling for a way to get a commission for a large tapestry for some time. He refused unless the Danish committee agreed to commission the tapestry as well. By 1959 Jorn had the entire resources of the San Giorgio factory in Albisola put at his disposal, 80 cubic metres of clay and a motor scooter. The clay was flattened out so that pieces of glass could be imbedded in it, and it was splashed and sprayed with paint. Jorn also liked to ride around the clay on the motor scooter so as to leave pretty track marks in the ceramic. By the 5th November, the relief was presented to the school.

But meanwhile Jorn had also been working on the mammoth tapestry which had to be ready by January 1st 1960. This 14 metre marathon took eighteen months. Pierre Wemaëre had collaborated with Jorn in the forties, and took over operational charge of the tapestry. In a catalogue preface entitled *Open Creation*, Gaston Bachelard wrote:

> *"By becoming complete tapestry makers — creators and craftsmen combined — Asger Jorn and Pierre Wemäere have been able to exercise their creative powers at every phase during the growth of their work. Tapestry is for them, in the words of the philosopher, 'a continuous creation'. (. . .) But two alone could not have produced the tapestry fast enough. Work that drags loses its vitality, so they enlarged their community. Their loom became an open workshop to which came new workers who were eager to realise their dreams in this enterprise. What a splendid example of open creation! When one craftsman replaces another he says to his predecessor: 'I shall base my work on yours, but I shall also add something of my own.' Little by little a world is woven. It takes many creators to make a good universe. (. . .) I find it good when work expresses*

life and when it imparts its own life to the life of the artefact. So I admire this image in wool that started as a plant. I admire those great leaves that rise slowly under the patient hand of the dreamer. And as the dream takes shape, so the plant becomes not a flower but an eye!"

(quoted from *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years 1954-64*, by Guy Atkins)

Like all good advertising copy, it flatters the prejudices of its audience. In April 1958 "while the SI was launching its attack against the art critics assembled in Belgium, Jorn's work was being shown at the Brussels 'Expo' as part of '*50 dans l'art moderne*'." (*The Assault on Culture*, by Stewart Home, 1988) Home dates Jorn's status as a major art figure from this exhibition. What is pathetic about Bachelard's remarks is also revealing about what elicited them. Jorn had simply used his status to get major contracts from the state. The extent of work he had undertaken meant that he was in a position to sub-contract out the work under his auspices, in the fashion of the early renaissance workshops, or even the mediaeval monastic libraries producing illuminated manuscripts. Bachelard's phoney euphoria of a method of creative production which stands outside the romantic image of the lone artist confronted by tiresome matter, shows a desire to appeal to the bourgeois dream of integrating workers through art. (A recent survey has revealed that 80% of the work force in Britain would rather become artists). Bachelard rounds off his purple prose with the inanity that "Anything is possible for those who dream long enough, who dream in their work."

Bachelard, from one perspective and Jorn from another seek transcendence in creativity, but stress that it "takes many creators to make a good universe". This was running contrary to Isou's hierarchical territory where he had Lemaître organise his election as 'God and Emperor of Poets', returning the favour by promoting Lemaître to the position of 'Prophet and King of Poets'. Andre Breton, who also received the rank of 'Prince of Poets', did not so much complain about the self-indulgence of this Ubuesque carry-on, as that Jean Cocteau was also included as a prince. Cocteau had proved very useful in the promotion of Isou's career. It was thanks to him that Isou won the *Prix d'Avant-Garde* at Cannes.

Bachelard seeks transcendence through an inter-subjective creative process, whereas Isou claims that he has already achieved transcendence through his own creativity, and that such transcendence may be made available to his followers, if they keep on the right track. This is no more interesting than the steady stream of gurus who have popped up and have used their grasp of various psychological techniques to build a racket around themselves.

Situ-Analysis

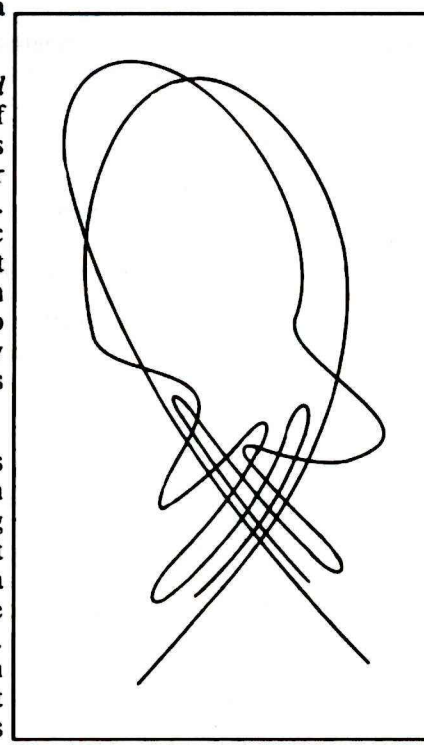
For the origins of Situationist theory we must go back one hundred years to 1895 when Henri Poincaré published *Analysis Situ*, usually translated into English as *Positional Analysis*. However we shall use the translation Situ-Analysis as it sounds more impressive, and is precisely the sort of rhetorical device which helps win

arguments. Henri Poincaré was a mild mannered mathematical wizard whose cousin, Raymond, became prime minister and later President of France. He studied mine-engineering, before absorbing himself in mathematics. His book Situ-Analysis helped topology become an important branch of mathematics. Topology deals with the qualitative characteristics of spatial configurations that do not vary during cumulative transformations.

Situ-Analysis arose after Poincaré had won a prize offered by King Oscar II of Sweden. Oscar II had been a patron of mathematics for some time. He had funded *Acta Mathematica*, a Swedish mathematical journal edited by Gösta Mittag-Lettler from 1883 until his death in 1927. One of the things which Mittag-Lettler did was publish much of the controversial work of the self-confessed Platonist, Georg Cantor. In 1887, Oscar II offered a prize of 2,500 crowns for whoever came up with an answer to the question *Is the Solar System stable?* In 1890 Poincaré published his response — *On the Problem of Three Bodies and the Equations of Dynamics* and won the prize. In essence he reduced Oscar II's question to one of topology. Stability implies periodic motion. If the system is defined in some n-dimensional phase space, as the system evolves in time it describes a curve. For a periodic solution, this implies that the curve is a closed loop. Thus if you find periodicy from any system state, the loop is closed. Such a system state is called a *Poincaré section.*

Poincaré applied this to Hill's *Reduced Model* of the three body problem. Here one of the body is given negligible mass allowing its trajectory to be determined by the two major bodies as they spin around each other. Poincaré was horrified to discover the periodic intersection of the trajectories produced a tight mesh as the trajectories fold back on themselves crossing the links of a web infinitely many times. (This was subsequently called a *Homoclinic Tangle.*) "The footprints of chaos" as Ian Stewart describes it.

Jorn's precision in defining the *situation* as excluding singularities and interruptions, with a constancy of intensity and a unique feeling of the propagation of the process shows that the *situation* is morphologically identical to a homoclinic tangle — "situlogy is the transformative morphology of the unique". When we consider the situationist project from this viewpoint, and in full recognition that *Chaos Theory* developed in mathematics precisely out of topology, we discover the convergence of art, science and politics.



A Homoclinic Tangle from *Does God Play Dice* by Ian Stewart

The *I.C.A.* screening of Debord's film *Hurlements in faveur de Sade* has entered the folklore surrounding the S.I. This took place four days after the S.I. produced their *Manifesto* (See appendix). The fact that the whole occasion was a farce is shown in the Ralph Rumney interview that appeared in Vague 22 (1990). Here Rumney reveals how Debord showed no interest in the production of a proper translation of the script. When a mystified individual enquired what situationism was, Debord used this as a pretext to lead his band of followers to the pub. However, it has been suggested by a keen-eyed comrade in the *Archaeogeodetic Association* that the whole charade was more about a trip to London to attend the lecture on topology given by Dr. Christopher Zeeman (who later on became *Gresham* professor of Geometry). When we look at the central significance of topology to situationist ideas, such a suggestion does not seem so far fetched. (Of course all this was before the *I.C.A.* became such close neighbours of the *Royal Society*.)

While the facetious academics of the bourgeoisie have located the Situationists within such categories as 'art' and 'politics', we have no desire to re-historicise the S.I. within 'mathematics' or 'science'. All these categories are *topics* (i.e. products of a rhetorical structure) located within the *New Philosophy* of the Renaissance. Chaos Theory, far from being a major breakthrough, is a symptom of the collapse of the bourgeois project of world domination, and its replacement with a holding operation protecting islands of resonance in a sea of chaos.

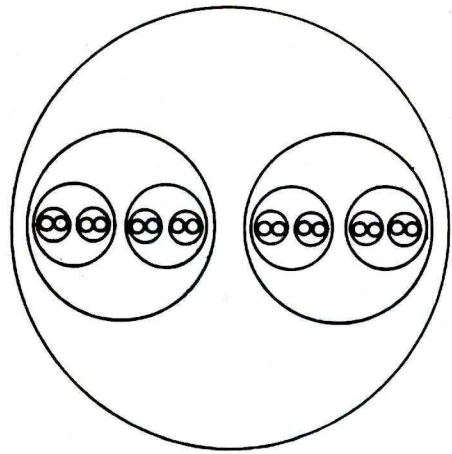
Nevertheless, we are confident that the republication of this text in the English edition will necessitate a reappraisal of the Situationist project, both by us and the bourgeoisie. Jorn's call for situlogy to introduce disorder into geometry was precisely carried out by Stephen Smale in the early sixties. Using Brouwer's fixed point theorem he showed that any mapping in n-dimensional space can be considered as a flow in (n+1) dimensional space.

Applying this to a torus which has been stretched and thinned and then wound around itself continually, you ultimately end up with an infinitely thin line wrapped around a torus an infinite number of times. This is called a solenoid by topologists. This is an equivalent of a cantor set.

A *Ueda Attractor*, an example of a Poincaré section in two dimensions

A solenoid is an example of a *strange attractor* — i.e. a position of stability to which dynamic systems are drawn in the long term, but which actually behave in a wild way. By creating numerical models, it is a case of the tail wagging the dog. The absolute quantity is not what is of importance, but the minute fraction found after so many million decimal points which distinguishes one value from those very close to it.

This reappearance of Cantor is interesting because Cantor's research of infinites lead to opposition from Kronecker, famous for his remark that "God made the integers, all else is the work of man." Kronecker objected to Cantor's pure existence proofs, and called for a constructivist approach whereby it is considered necessary to show how a mathematical object could be constructed before accepting that it existed.



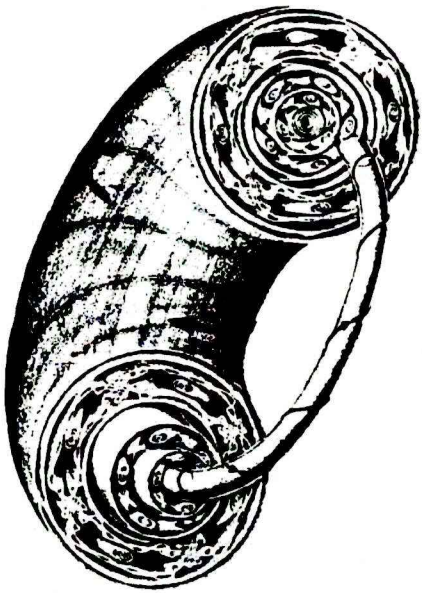
Cantor cheese: topologically equivalent to the Cantor set but using circles

In 1889, when Hilbert took pure existence proofs further, another mathematician, Paul Gordon declared "This is not mathematics, it is theology". But the success of Hilbert's work lead Gordon to reluctantly admit "theology also has its merits." Following Kronecker's death, the Dutch mathematician Brouwer developed the constructivist approach. He was scared that mathematics would become cluttered with ideal objects which would then simply generate more ideal objects. Soon it would become impossible to tell whether maths had any real meaning. He fought for a purely constructivist maths.

But mainstream maths followed Hilbert, who attempted to control the drift into wanton abstraction by looking at maths as purely formal system, a game where the objects are less interesting than the rules and relations created amongst the objects. His formalist approach dominated maths until the thirties. Many mathematicians felt that to strip maths down to the few remnants left by the constructivist method would lead to isolated, incomplete and unrelated results.

However Hilbert's formalist scheme came crashing down when Kurt Gödel showed that no formal system rich enough to cover basic arithmetic can be shown to be consistent. Yet despite this, formalism had become so ingrained in mathematics that it did not readily disappear. To many mathematicians this "frog and mouse battle" (Einstein) seemed irrelevant. Either that or they followed d'Alembert's advice for those unsure of the rigour of calculus "Go on and faith will return." Thus chaos theory reconciles Cantor and Brouwer (something that Errett Bishop also tried to achieve in *The Foundation of Constructive Analysis*.)

Applications in weather prediction soon gave a concrete area for chaos theory to work in. Things also took off with studies of turbulence. This had been studied by Leonardo da Vinci. (The British Queen keeps some excellent manuscripts on this in Windsor Castle.) Novalis coined the phrase 'sensitive chaos' for water. Scientists soon found that the chaotic dynamics of strange attractors was responsible for some turbulence.



VAK: example of a strange attractor from Abraham and Ramsden, *Foundations of Mathematics* 1978

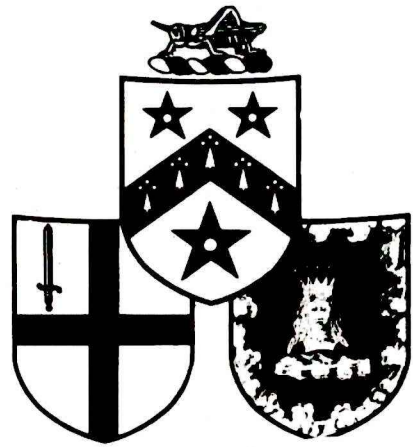
Jorn concludes his essay with a call to reconsider the "mystical notion of the four elements" and discusses phase transitions (the transformation of solid into liquid, and liquid into gas). Some may simply see in this a fairly standard restatement of traditional freemasonic ideas. However, Mitchell Feigenbaum was studying just such transformations when in 1975 he heard Smale talk about dynamic systems. Feigenbaum took this up, and applied renormalisation to logistic mapping. He ended up coming up with the feigenvalue 4.669, a relative universal value. Mandelbrot developed fractals and Abraham and Marsden developed VAK (Vague Attractor of Kolmogorov). Here only some quasi-periodic motions survive. Elsewhere, chaotic trajectories wind between islands of resonance. (VAK is also the name of the goddess of vibration in the Rig-Veda).

Having demonstrated how precisely Jorn's article foreshadowed the mathematical development of chaos theory, we should re-appraise the interaction between mathematics and art, which has been so close ever since the renaissance. At a superficial level, the power fractal ofart is readily apparent. However the recursion and self-similarity are features which transfuse both chaotic maths and 'post-modernism' ('Post-modernism' appears in inverted commas so as to demonstrate disdain for this pseudo-intellectual sleight of hand which is being passed off as theory in an attempt to divert attention from the impending collapse of bourgeois culture.)

Such cultural furniture does not appear organically or by chance. Chaos theory has champions drawn from the very heights of the bourgeoisie. The *Royal Society* organised a prestigious conference in London in 1986. There Chaos was defined mathematically as "Stochastic behaviour occurring in a deterministic system."

The Royal Society has long featured in the foreground of any studies of bourgeois cultural manipulation. It's origins lie in a fusion of the two facets of John Dee's philosophical tradition — Freemasonry, the mystical tradition which stemed from the application of ideas expressed in Dee's *Preface to Euclid*, and the scientific which was expressed with the setting up of *Gresham College* (See also LPA Newsletter No.3). Professor Ayitah, current President of the *Royal Society* played a major role as Director of the *Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences*. He decides which topics are to be included in their series of study programmes. The *INI* has been set up largely with money from the Cambridge colleges of St. John's and Trinity. Atiyah is Master at the latter (as Isaac Newton was before him). The two

colleges celebrated their joint escapade by opening an interconnecting door which has been firmly closed since the second world war.



Device of *Gresham College* featuring the arms of Sir Thomas Gresham, The Mercers and the City of London

The *INI* was opened by Robert Hinde, Master of St. John's, on July 3rd 1992. Within a year the champagne corks were popping as Andrew Wiles attended a reception in his honour following his demonstration of a proof of Fermat's last theorem. (Fermat's last theorem states that "it is impossible for a cube to be written as a sum of two cubes, or a fourth power to be written as a sum of two fourth powers, or in general, for any number which is a power greater than the second to be written as a sum of two like powers." This was scribbled in the margin by Pythagoras's theorem. He added he had found "a truly marvellous demonstration of this proposition which this margin is too narrow to contain.")

In the centuries since Fermat scrawled his famous marginalia, this theorem has bedevilled mathematicians. One side effect of various mathematicians efforts to provide a proof has been the extension and development of new areas of mathematics such as imaginary numbers.

From the seventies it was apparent that the proof of Fermat's last theorem would herald the demise of the capitalist system*. That the bourgeoisie should feel obliged to release its proof in 1993 shows just how critical the current world situation is. As the L.P.A. stated in an article in Variant, it was fortunate that the Calanais edition of *Open Creation and its Enemies* was released before Wiles could make his announcement. (The text was published on Monday 21st June 1993, the day Wiles began his lecture series. A copy arrived at Cambridge University first thing Wednesday morning. Wiles could not come up with his demonstration of the proof till 10:30 am that morning.)

As if to underline how apposite these observations are, none other than Professor Zeeman himself is to give a lecture on *Fermat's Last Theorem* at 5pm on May 31st 1994 at Gresham College (Admission is free and without ticket). This is part of a lecture programme as laid down by Thomas Gresham nearly 400 years ago and will be followed by questions. The LPA intends to be present and suggest that anyonehoping to attend would be well advised to arrive early as it will probably be packed.

25th November 1993

* *I have found a truly marvellous demonstration of this proposition which this margin is too narrow*

Bibliographical Notes:

These translations were made from *internationale situatuionniste 1958-69* published by Éditions Gérard Lebovici/éditions Champ Libre, 1975. Unfortunately these texts have not been entirely translated into English. Thus people have had to make do with Ken Knabb's *Situationist Anthology*, (San Francisco 1975). This text hides as much as it illuminates, obfucscating some of the political tensions in favour of producing a seemless theoretical vantage point.

It is a sad reflection on the present state of affairs that it is our grim duty to report that *Lipstick Traces, A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* by Greil Marcus (Penguin 1989) remains a major source of material on the Lettrists and the early days of the S.I. For a more sensible view of the Lettrists see *Lettrisme: Into the Present*, edited by Stephen C. Foster 1983. This was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the University of Iowa Museum of Art. For those who like to read French, Pierre Cutay's *La Poesie Lettriste (*1974) is excellent, not least for its revelation that Louis Pauwels introduced Lemaître to Isou. Also see *Lettrisme et Hypergraphie* (Paris) by Gerard-Philippe Broutin, Jean-Paul Curtay, Jean Pierre Gillard and François Poyet.

For Asger Jorn, see Guy Atkins' trilogy *Jorn in Scandinavia* (London, 1968), *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years 1954-64*, (London, 1977), and *Asger Jorn : The Final Years* (London 1984). Also Graham Birtwistle's *Living Art, Asger Jorn's Theory 1946-9* (Utrecht 1986). Of course we have to recommend Stewart Home's *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (1988) — we were the original publishers!

The illusion of a comprehensive understanding of mathematics was gained by reading *Does God Play Dice* by Ian Stewart (1989) (Not to be confused with Ian *Stuart* Donaldson the dead Nazi featured in the recent LPA leaflet). As for the discussion of perspective it was all cribbed from the *Oxford Book of Art*.

For the *New Philosophy*, it is worth reading Frances Yates several volumes — indeed it was through reading her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* that we came to understand the link between Rosicrucianism and the S.I. Also we mention *Witch-hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy*, Brian Easlea, Brighton 1980. Of course it is worth consulting Francis Bacon himself — eg: *The New Atlantis*,*The Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organon*. In a more artistic vein, we refer to *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* by Edgar Wind (London 1958) and Gombrich's *Icones Symbolicae*, (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XI, 1948)

Of course, all serious students of Situationist ideas and other modernist trends will come to realise the importance of John Dee's *Very Fruitful Preface to the English Edition of the Elements of the Geometry of the Most Ancient Philosopher Euclid of Megara* penned on February 3rd 1570.

Originality and Magnitude

(on the system of Isou)

Asger Jorn,

Internationale Situationniste 4

June 1960

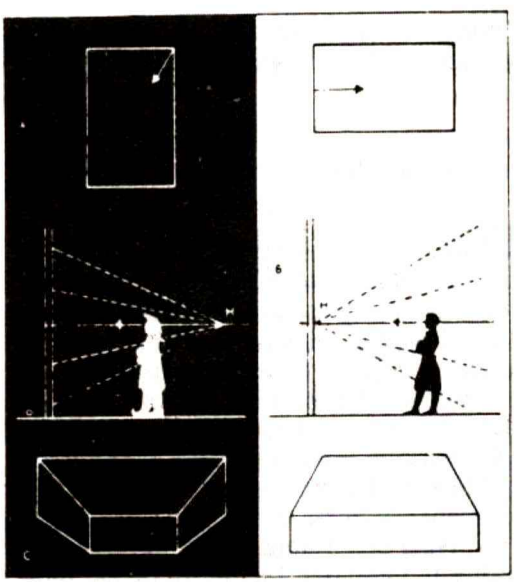
In No. 10 of *Poesie Nouvelle* (First Trimester, 1960), Isidore Isou, refuting the writings of one of his friends from a recent period, whom he soberly calls X in order not to give him unmerited publicity, declares:

"One of the shabbiest lies of the author of *Grammes*, is to speak of my general philosophical system when a) I have never published this system, and b) X is neither a prophet or cartomancer of the future.

If a number of my comrades who worked with me over the years, from Pomerand to Lemaitre, have tried to divine the general system (and lacking the possibility they have at least the honesty to hold their tongue on this question), how could X, who scarcely knows me, be able to know it? . . . The unique thing that Mr. Grammes could know of my intellectual Order is that it accords to the creations of each domain an essential determined value, in relation to other values. But it is this which makes the successive X's who, having known me, have no other supreme desire than to become creators. Thus the unique illumination that X has of my system ends at his conscious or unconscious effort to follow it, just when the ignorance of the whole of the system leads him to the real incapacity to create and the obligation to replace this creation with the tittle-tattle and lying pretensions about that which he knows nothing . . . It is only by accepting the creative hierarchy of the only movement of the contemporary avant-garde — given the general name of 'Lettrism' — by candidly assimilating *the innovating truth of the immediate past and present*, by openly recognising the forms of future evolution of the aesthetic disciplines that will truly be born for the history of culture and *for the place of each author in this history*." (Emphasis A.J.)

Isou's argument is constructed around a fundamental error according to which the knowledge of a system is only possible after you have become acquainted with all the consequences of the application of the system; an idea which is pushed to the extreme by revealing the system through the testimony of the initiatory individual account, and the importance given to the particular usage that the master can make of his own system. In fact the system is a method. *It is the method of the co-ordination of positions*, of states. And, as the positions don't change, the system, or the positional methods, are always revealed by analysing a combination taken at random in the system.

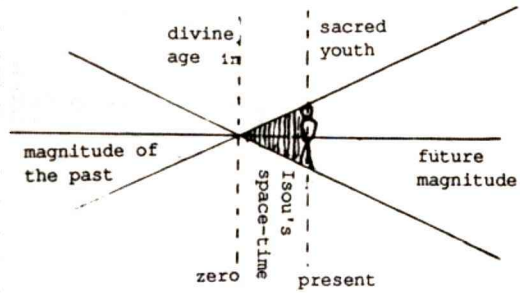
Isou's system is not a scientific system, as there are no longer any scientific systems. If Isou's system had been a scientific system, it could not be 'Isou's system', but only the application of the scientific system by Isou in a given domain. *Isou's system necessitates Isou.* It is a system of relations between subject and object. This system is an *outlook*. You don't have to be a prophet or a cartomancer to work that out; you just have to be completely detached. I don't know Isou, and I'm starting to be acquainted with his system. The order in which he arranges historic events is an extremely amusing and interesting thing, perfectly new in the European outlook: *he measures all values according to Chinese perspective*, just as values have been measured according to a central perspective since the renaissance.



Chinese perspective and western perspective (The arrow in rectangle A indicates the usual deplacement of the view.)

It is today a generally recognised fact that time is a dimension like any other, to be treated as those of space. Existentialism is opposed to the classic system by pretending that the instant is the unique value. Isou opposes to this by establishing *a little range of values between the immediate past and the present* (which today is Isou). Isou is placed as a magnitude in his own perspective. Those who go in for this, with the obligatory slowness of followers of what has already been made by Isou, are *smaller*, and diminish from Lemaitre to Pomerand, to finally arrive at the zero point, where we find the poor Mr X, who according to Isou's system, is the nothing of everything, the nullity, *the historic non-place* (but this is the historic non-place of the historic space of *Isou*, which explains the importance Isou gives to the repeated description of this nothingness, this personification of the anonymous). If the lines of perspective are prolonged beyond the zero point, history is expanded once again towards the pre-

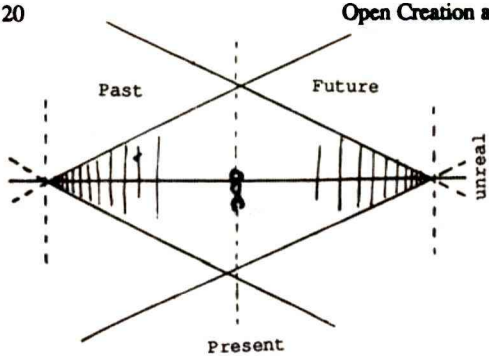
Isouian past, and the more the magnitudes are expanded in the past, the more they are accepted by Isou without criticism, and characterised according to their awkwardly scholastic reputations (Homer, Descartes etc.). This is the hierarchic order of Isou as regards the past; and as regards the future, where in any case he reckons a *central* creative place will come to be recognised *for eternity*, he will expect that an even greater system will replace it, and at the same time confirm it. "In order to better establish the possibilities of the preservation of a section of the avant-garde", he goes along with the Breton's famous formula about "the birth of a more emancipatory movement" . Nothing is more comfortable than to wait for successors. But each 'avant-garde' tends towards senility and death without seeing its successors, because the succession is not passed on by a direct line, but through contradiction.



Isou's Chinese perspective

Having so clarified Isou's system of valorisation, an essential problem must now be posed: is it more of a religious system than an artistic one. It must be because he is unable to make a decision on this point that Isou has not yet published the final word on his system. From reading the development of his thought from the accessible material, it seems that there can be discerned a slippage by which the religious and cultural side more and more replace the artistic; the hierarchic aspect becomes more important than the movement of Chinese perspective.

In order to be *oriented*, and from this fact to *calibrate*, in any particular dimension, it is always necessary to find a zero point, the point of departure or origin, whence proceeds all graduation. But the question is posed here: is Isou's zero point fixed in history in the same way that the birth of Christ is fixed as the origin of our calendar. Isou thus becomes forever greater as he moves forward in time. Equally, is his Chinese perspective historically displaced through time? In this case, Isou will come to be diminished more and more in order to become the zero point of a new avant-garde, and only afterwards will he accede to the aggrandisement of the past. Thus the question is restated: could Isou's system be employed as a method by others? This would increase the importance of the system, but must then diminish the importance of his personage. The impression is that it would benefit from two advantages, but this is impossible without the whole unhappy system being destroyed and renewed. This eventuality cannot be theoretically excluded. Isou was close to such a discovery in his recent reflections on prodigality, by which he found himself obliged to recognise the superiority of the situationist practices over the lettrist system. The unresolved problem on this religious question, and the double game which necessarily arose from it, has contributed to the very quick dissolution of the avant-garde regrouped around Isou around 1950. This is found, degraded to



Double perspective of classical Europe

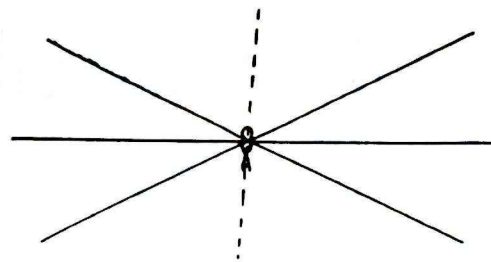
farce, in the eternal discussion of Isou with Maurice Lemaître who for years constituted Isou's 'the lettrist group' all on his own (cf. the same issue of *la Poésie Nouvelle).*

The disaster of Isou's system is to place the zero point as a *divine point* in the past, as much as placing himself as a sacred object. It is not by chance that the Chinese perspective is found in an ideology secretly held by Buddhism. In contrast, the classic system places the divine zero point at the centre of the perspective of the future, and the sacred in the anti-world radiating towards infinity, beyond the extreme point of reality. The artistic bearing is a systematisation of facts which themselves ignore his system. When this is unveiled, established, the artistic value is always pursued elsewhere (the innocent vision is inverted in principle). In the same way as the rich 'lettrist' researches (in the common sense of the word) of manuscripts from the end of the middle ages have been eliminated by printing (quantitative distribution of writing through the elimination of variations), so the lucky find, by the renaissance, of the central perspective has radically finished Christian art, of which the variables were eliminated by this organisation-type of Christian space. In effect, the central perspective, if it is transposed onto the dimension of time, exactly represents Christian metaphysics, the beyond being in the imaginary future, marked out by two successive points: death and the Judgement Day. The utopians had placed their perspective *on the earth* (in the historic future), and the artistic inspiration of modern times is essentially a futurist utopianism.

Isou's Chinese perspective could therefore be compared to the Me-zero (divine-sacred identity) perspective, the outlook of radiating subjectivity of Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen, so typical of Scandinavian thought. The advantages of Isou's system can be seen on this terrain. In the end, a modern perspective could be invoked which considered the qualitative development of magnitude. This is the purely scientific outlook, characterised by its point of origin in the past, the zero point at the beginning of time. It is this outlook that we actually find confirmed at the cosmic level with the theory of the expanding universe. Scientific socialism is linked to this outlook. But overall this question is so vast because there are many new outlooks which have now been created.

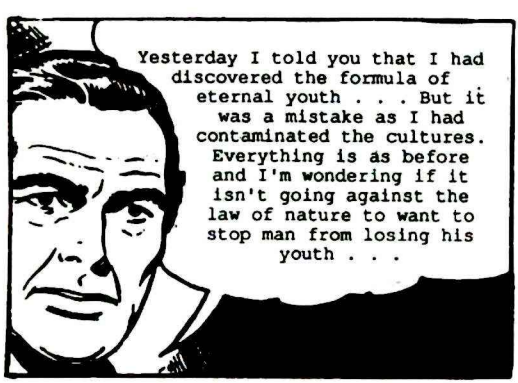
The Isou's *religious* problem is complicated by a perplexity on the following theme: "I am god, seeing as how god is youth; seeing as how I am Isou, the point of origin". He must choose between his personal originality and that of the system which he has created and which automatically excludes him from the sphere of originality at the end of youth. The reservations which Isou has as regards his own system are easily explained. He is ageing, my friend!

The divinisation of the immediate past is *the divinisation of the aged* (the older generation), which is associated, through the dynamic use of Isou's Chinese perspective, with his concept of *holy youth*. ("We start a career . . ."). Thus the aged Isou sees the new youth start to overthrow him in virtue of his own system, and he flees to a more assured place, protected by the books of Breton. The drama unfolds, it's simply that Lettrism has superseded surrealism. In this way it will retire to claim its part in literary immortality. What gaiety! Holy youth! It returns all the time, and it is always the same. I have exposed this gimmick in *La Roue de la Fortune* [The Wheel of Fortune] in 1948.



V. Bjerke-Petersen's perspective
(Mystical outlook of the identity
of past-present-future)

It is time to become aware of the drawbacks of all the systems of perspective derived from classical geometry. Many errors arise from a major illusion of modern savants: a distinction between 'classical' and 'modern' geometry was made in the belief that the autonomy of classical geometry could be saved, and that it could be taught as if this geometry, and that which had superseded it were simultaneously true. In the geometry of Euclid, and which has been transmitted to the non-Euclidean systems, *the point is defined as a spatial location with no spatial dimension*. This omits the fact that *the point, bereft of spatial dimensions, still represents the temporal dimension, thanks to its duration. The point thus introduces the dimension of time into spatial organisation, which is the basis of a new elementary geometry.* (It is this new study of the point which enables the situation to be understood as a spatial-temporal work alien to the old properties of art). When the point is considered as a pure *idea*, geometry is infected with metaphysics and lends itself to the emptiest constructions of metaphysics. Nothing is left of it.


Yesterday I told you that I had discovered the formula of eternal youth . . . But it was a mistake as I had contaminated the cultures. Everything is as before and I'm wondering if it isn't going against the law of nature to want to stop man from losing his youth . . .

Human creation does not resemble this sort of garden *a la française*, such as Isou would want to embellish, the centre of which he believes he will come to *definitively occupy*, simply because, preaching untiringly in the emptiness, he foresees (in his own words, 'the opening of a new amplic'*) the completely *symmetrical* reproduction *of the other side of Isou.*

* According to Isou *amplic* refers to a phase of growth in art,when it presents ideas from outside its own domain.

Open Creation and its Enemies

Asger Jorn,

Internationale Situationniste 5

December 1960

1

"Some people would never be considered, were it not that some excellent adversaries had mentioned them. There is no greater vengeance than oblivion, as it buries such people in the dust of their nothingness."

Baltasar Gracian. *L'Homme de Cour*

"I have never considered the Situationist International as one of those intellectual errors that only needs to be left to crumble to dust, scattering its corpses. I have always had a horror of those exploiters of other people's discoveries, whose only justification is the synthesis they achieve. I have reason to consider the situationists as sub-marxists from the twentieth zone, full of troglodyte anti-cultural formulations. There is an ex-painter of the Cobra movement, who has principles which have come to nothing (It's me, Asger Jorn, that he's talking about). He only produces abstract lyricism of the fourth zone or fifth order. It was only in 1948, after Bjerke Petersen inspired the formation of Cobra with the support of Richardt Mortensen, Egler Bille and Egill Jacobsen following the war, that he showed himself in a coherent fashion. Even his support in his own country remains without real importance (there are some artists who, if they aren't noticed at the international level, go off and knock out some forged creations in the national framework). I advise him to stick to painting, not because I value his pictures, but because I have read his 'philosophical' works. Abstract art, above all that of a manufacturer prefaced by Jacques Prévert, the Paul Géraldy of surrealism, must be sold well and

impassion all the dressmakers. My cultural conception and my creation makes me rigorous in my writings. I already have enough difficulties from being solely responsible for my own writings, whence there are no false phrases or judgements to be retracted." For all the reasons which he so exposes, I understand perfectly that the lettrist Lemaître has left it to a scribe to take the trouble to fill 136 pages of his review Poésie Nouvelle No. 13 with closely set little characters in a study on the Situationist International.

The enormous extent of the work is its single exceptional character, which is easily explained. As I think I have shown in my study on value, an endeavour of invention and understanding cannot be paid by the hour, and in consequence cannot objectively be measured with money. The habits of industrial production have clearly penetrated certain strata across the frontier of intellectual life, and for example, journalism is routinely paid by the line. But it is obvious that the interest of these types of workers is to increase the speed and the quantity of production to the detriment of the quality. Above all this can be seen in the poverty of reportage, as this must be got together in time which isn't paid for. And such a way of carrying out work implies an easily overstretched inferior intelligence of the financial backers, who are satisfied with such standards. Lemaître has been forced to commit such rashness thanks to his stated 'strategic reasons' which however remain obscure. He says, he 'avoided the idea of expounding on the SI' himself. If so, he had better squarely let the matter drop or give the work over to a man of culture. Because *Lemaître, as an entrepreneur, is completely responsible* for the work of his pieceworkers.

In *Internationale Situationiste* No.4, I unveiled the system, the ideological grammar of Lemaître, by clarifying that it was a subjective outlook of positions established in relation to Lemaître himself, rather than an objective system. Lemaître admits his ignorance and his lack of scientific creativity (p.74). How could he then take my statement as an insult? It is indisputable that my critique of the marxist concept of value is strictly scientific, and it is, moreover, the first complete critique which has been made of it. Lemaître calls it 'sub-sub-sub-marxism'. And why not? It is nevertheless necessary to note that Lemaître has recognised and evaluated the scientific characteristics in the experimental work of the S.I., as he has been able to deal with this subject for 136 pages without mentioning a single name of any of the participants of this experiment. This is pure objectivity. Lemaître has played on the law of large numbers. He attributes many quotes without distinction to someone he calls 'the situationist'. These were taken from the writings of ten of our comrades (the collective declarations of the IS are not an issue here: this figure applies only to those texts which are found to be signed individually by their authors).

Lemaître has fallen in the trap between the absolute and the measurement system of classical Euclidean geometry, as marxism has done. He pushes it only as far as unintentional jokes, such as wanting to distinguish the graduations of eternity. He pretends (p56) to be capable of ensuring a 'more eternal' victory than anyone else.

Elsewhere, it is very funny to read Lemaître. The post-marxist character inspired by the organisation of the workers struggling to improve their economic situation is clearly visible as the basis of the erotological practice that Lemaître has pointed out in many large books. The effort so presented to organise a union of gigolos,

systematising their struggle for an increase in their wages and markedly improving their technique in satisfying even the most dramatic passions of their clients, is an honest reformist enterprise, the day to day defence of actual employees within the existing economic framework. Lemaître has recently admitted that this education would be impotent at the situationist stage of miracle-working, but doesn't know what to conclude from this intuition. If he made the effort, man could be naturally seen as the producer, and woman as the consumer in the erotic process as long as their relationship had no consequences. And if the number of boys born dropped considerably in relation to the number of girls, this could open perspectives which would merit economic considerations. But it is impossible to consider youth as being more a producer than a consumer; and completely against the interest of youth to diminish their consumption at the cultural level, by means of the reduction of school leaving age proposed by Lemaître, by which they would be thrown into production more quickly, even if this would be in the interest of industry. Marx's struggle in this realm will always have a passionate value, and our goal is to confirm the right, not merely for youth, but for every individual, to realise themselves according to their free desires in autonomous creation and consumption. The focus of such a development could right away be U.N.E.S.C.O., from the moment when the S.I. takes command of it; new types of popular university, broken away from the passive consumption of the old culture; lastly, utopian educational centres which through the relation of leisure to certain arrangements of social spaces, they must come to be more completely free of the dominant daily life, and at the same time functioning as bridgeheads for an invasion of this daily life, instead of pretending to be separated from it.

An excellent book could be made out of Lemaître's economic theory seen as a literary work like a Rabelaisian farce, with the revolt of youth taken as a caricature of the revolutionary and socialist thought of the nineteenth century. But from the moment when Lemaître shows that he takes it seriously, he is a demagogue. One of the classic gimmicks of demagogues is to mobilise the people against dangers which everyone knows about, and which excite them, but which have become inoffensive. It has been the fashion to shout wrongly about fascism since the war, when new socio-cultural conditions are being prepared, and when the new ideological dangers appear inoffensive:, and leading to *moral rearmament* by all the variants of neo-religious fanaticism. Far from 'misrecognising the power of his method', as Lemaître says, I have recognised them, I denounce them, and I declare war on them. I prefer a contrary method. And the sole consideration I can give to Lemaître, to his scribbler, to those who could adhere to their system of thought, or just as likely to take it up and use it without them, it is to quote the phrases to which I am absolutely opposed. In No. 13 of *Poésie Nouvelle* :

"My level of merit based on the works or actions which improve the human condition place in their lower ranks the current *provisional* practices. I believe that at the daily level the 'non-being' formulated by certain existentialist philosophers is true: *we are only a mass* of waste material having some possibility of acquired and limited choices. But what distinguishes my system is that, for me, the only liberty, which is minimal, resides in the minuscule invention or discovery of that rare being which is known as the 'innovator', in the wake of whose relevations that the other

human beings can only follow, as they have until then followed the 'lesser good', the inferior" (p116)
"Rightly or wrongly, I have always believed afresh in the power to sometimes use the energies of my fellows better than they themselves." (p44)
"They must trust and follow me, instead of always staying behind." (p29)
"The religious Jews can pretend that no-one has gone further than them, as the Messiah has not arrived. The Christians have reason to state that they have not been outclassed as their fellows have not been saved from their misery, and as they have been helped to the resurrection of the dead . . . *At this general level, I give reason to these groups*, who defend certain essential values and that I hope to honestly supersede by offering them what they want: the messiah, human safety, the resurrection of the dead, gnosis" (p28)
"The situationists, like the sub-troglodytes that they are, no longer want to conserve anything . . they not only reject the future of cultural disciplines, but also the past and the present, in the name of a pseudo-utopian, outdated, spineless, infantile bluff . . . Finally our ignorant reactionaries will be rejected by and punished by the research of disciplines of knowledge, just as they have rejected and punished others in the past." (p63).
I believe that these extracts from Lemaître's *Mein Kamf* suffice to show his main tendency towards 'degenerate art'. As for the threats, those that go so far as to make use of them are not always equipped with the capacity of the most extensive sanctions. And we are not the in any way frightened by constructing this 'provisional' life, because Lemaître has let us know (p123) that he has " a great horror of his living person". Well, that's his problem! He also said that he preferred Malraux to the situationists (but will this complement be *paid back*?) Anyway, I would let him get on with Malraux. For nothing.

2

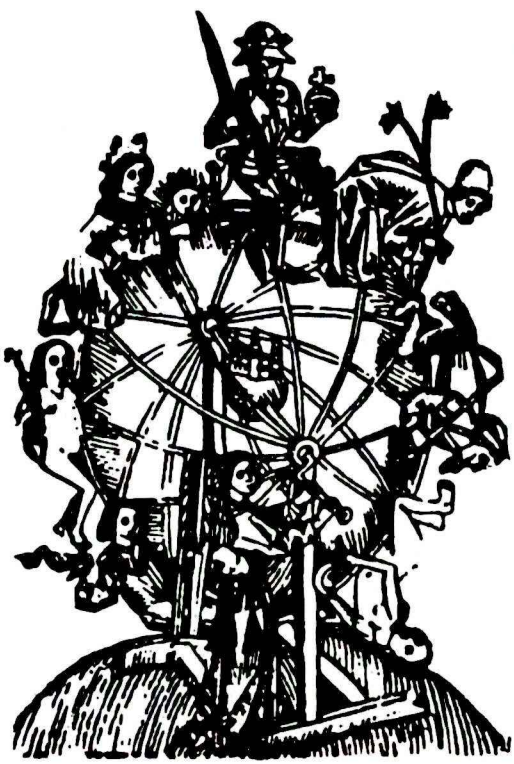
> *"I am sad, but in spite of all my efforts, M. Mesens doesn't want to publish PIN. Even when I said to him that we didn't want any money, he laughed and said that if he was to publish it, we would have to give him money, but that he had no intention of doing so. He had read it attentively but he didn't like it He said that it would have been more topical twenty five years ago, but that now we would not be greeted with comprehension . . .*
> *There is another thing: there are some imitators, for example, the lettrists in Paris who copy the Ursonate that Hausmann and I did, and we weren't even mentioned, we who had done it twenty five years before them , and with better reasons."*
> Kurt Schwitters. *Letter of 29 - 3-47* quoted in *Courrier Dada.*

What weapons does Lemaître want to use? Here, he falls for the psychiatric theory of a little Swiss man called Karl Jaspers, who from his perspective attains a 'stature' equal to that of Moses and of Plato (p66 & p80). From Lemaître's perspective, this

Jaspers has become enormous, because he is closer to him in time and ideas. The enormity of Jaspers, who has the merit of being considered as one of the most famous imbeciles of our century, is to have postulated with all the authority of a non-scientific psychiatrist, that all individuals who are not an imbecile like him are mentally ill, and by this fact a public danger that society should be able to allow them to be locked up and nursed. Lemaître has amplified this idea to a world dimension: everyone is mad; an integral therapy would be necessary, and is clearly justified; and according to him the therapy would be (quote: "only to have proposed an *integral* therapy capable of curing the permanent illness of youth and world history". p55)

What is this permanent illness of the history of the world? During the phase of youth, each individual or group possesses a fantastic will, in relation to minimum capacities and non-existent consciousness. The adult age possesses a real power stronger than their will, which is subject to the routine of actions. The fatigue of old age is compensated for by experience, the consciousness which dominates power and will. By proposing Gnosis for the salvation of youth, Lemaître only proposes a process of rapid ageing, he even proposes that the youth should engage their wills as quickly as possible in social power, prisoner, of the existing establishment.

Lemaître precisely reproaches the situationists for not following the rules of his game: "So many mythic and mystifying formulas, which confound their classification and their integration into the domain of knowledge, also hinder the establishment of necessary historic relations between the superseded-superseding and the superseding-superseded." In effect, unswervingly convinced of his linear succession, of his little hierarchy etc., blind to everything else, Lemaître cries that the situationists have not superseded him, and are to be placed much lower down than him. Well then? My friend the Danish Poet Jens August Shade told me one day: "You can fall so low that the fall becomes uplifting." There is nothing mystifying in our behaviour. I have never had any desire to supersede you, Lemaître and company. We are coming across each other: that's all And now we are going to continue with the same trajectory that we approached by, without this encounter having had the slightest importance.



The leninist example of the troglodytes was equally badly chosen. The conflict between Lenin and the Russian

futurists is only one example in a general crisis and a subversion of the revolution to which Lenin had contributed with his very compact and superficial attack against leftism considered as 'an infantile disease", rather than as an illness of infancy, of hope. Anyhow, I am old enough to remember the epoch when Lenin himself was considered as a troglodyte by the whole world. One day, I shall probably be used, when I am dead as an anti-troglodyte against someone.

Lemaître is infatuated with the idea that time could abolish unfashionable cultural references which he has found, or had his specialist scribe pick up in the public libraries. But as anyone knows, like living reality, culture is what is left when all that has been understood has been forgotten. Nothing is worse than stupidity combined with a never failing memory. This is without wanting to discuss the weak quality, the wholes and bluffs in the *digest* of encyclopedism of Lemaître's *brain trust.*

Lemaître seems to disdain the experimental value that we have recognised in the lettrist movement around 1950, in two or three sectors of culture. He says that the experimental aspect of lettrism had been real but negligible in comparison to its essential value: a system of creation. Thus he impudently spits on his only asset, because we consider, as history will consider with us, that all that he calls his 'creation' is absolutely empty and has no future. Because Lemaître believes that it is his solipsistic dream of creation which must be recognised as the sole historic value, he is astonished that, for example, we don't recognise the importance of lettrist poetry. This poetry has no importance as an artistic creation, even as a function of the 'creative', arbitrary and untransferable systemisation of Lemaître. As much as the whole of the lettrist movement has for a time played a role in the real avant-garde of a given epoch, onomatopoeic poetry, which was its first manifestation, came twenty five years after Schwitters, and clearly was in no way experimental.

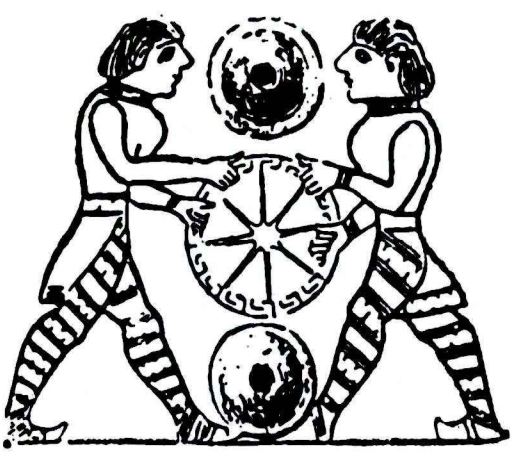
In other respects there was nothing unique about the lettrists except in Paris. However, Lemaître is so geographically bound that, without smiling, he measures the comparative influences of the S.I.. and groupuscles which appeared for six months on the Left Bank, and which are still only known about by him; he judges them according to articles whose dedication has generally been solicitated by the groups themselves or "posters plastered all round paris in their name" (p41). This Lemaître allows concessions to everyone for making known the discoveries which, as has been seen, all the mystifiers, Christian or not, have on sale. He pretends that he had plenty of time to understand, and does not ask about the reason for this total incomprehension, for this refusal of the whole world in relation to his wonderful creations. It is fifteen years since lettrism arose, it has chosen no enemies, but wants to convert the whole world. And without slackening, it has presented the (sub-Cartesian) demonstration of its dogmas throughout twenty books. However it has remained very poorly known about. And, to take his examples, Lemaître doesn't want it recognised that fifteen years after their appearance, surrealism or symbolism had already been largely imposed on culture. In a much less greedy epochs than our own, these movements appeared, a novelty in all domains, and then the cultural ideologies, much less decomposed than those of today, fought them in the name of the conservation of the order of the past. Hence Max Bense, the German equivalent of this anecdote of systematic, paradialectic, and deadly boring 'lettrist thought'.

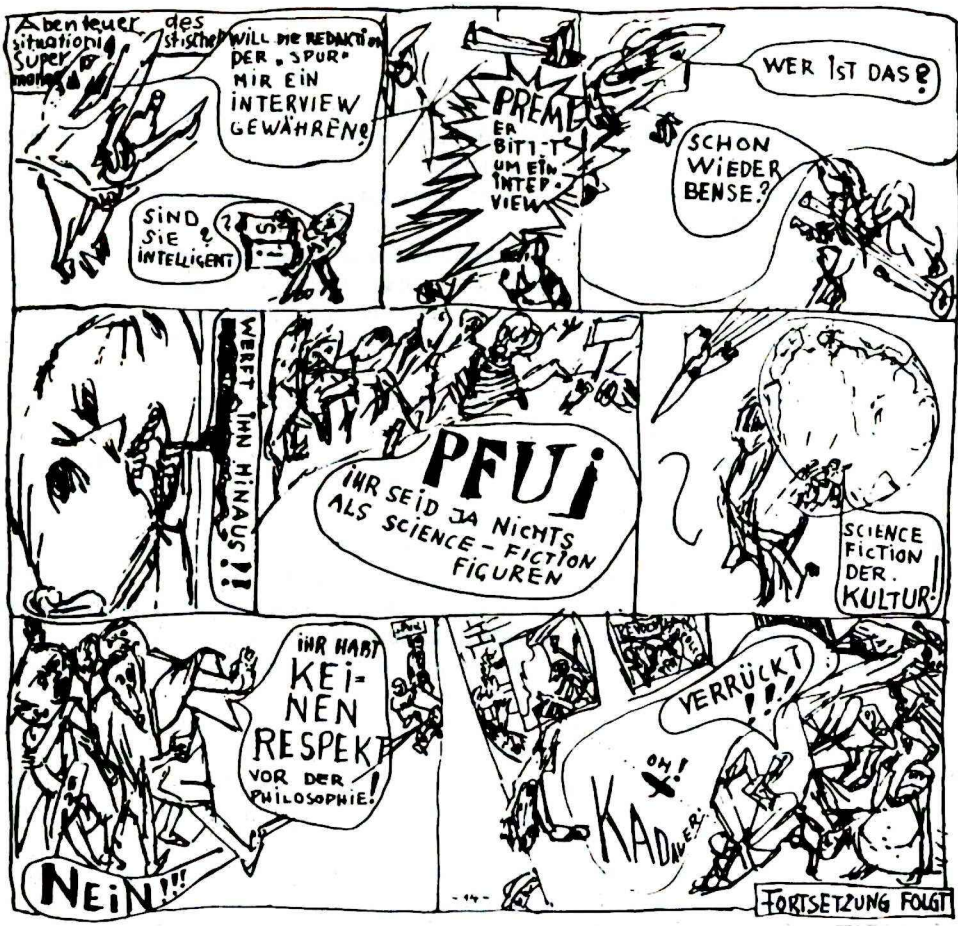
They are equally typical of this epoch. What do you want? They are of great use as classifiers of values. But of values without actuality. In terms of Americanised culture, these are the *gadgets* of the Ideal home exhibition of the spirit.

3

> *"It takes less time to create a material which is deficient, much longer to form a personality. And if a single error has been made in the production of the material, it can be repaired, if necessary by destroying the useless machine and so going through profits and losses. A man, once formed, is not destroyed; for forty years he is ready to perform the activity for which he has been trained . . ."*
>
> Alfred Sauvy. *De Malthus à Mao Tsé-Toung*

Chinese perspective is not Chinese culture. But it is a valuable and important outlook. At any one moment, real living humanity covers a little less than two centuries. The oldest are about a hundred years old, and some among the new born will be destined to live as long in the future. There is a perpetual tension between these two temporal extremes of humanity. The cycle of this wheel of life, this eternal return is a permanent revolution upon which thousands of reflections have been made since the Summerians, the Buddhists, Plato, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and so on. Zoroastrianism is the outcome of this train of thought, with the idea of a single oriented rotation of history from a unique beginning up to a definitive and irreversible end. This dualist outlook and unilateral orientation was transmitted to Judaism, Christianity and Islam; at the same time it passed into Mithraism, manicheeism and gnosticism. Following Lemaître's Gnostic confession, it is clear that he is not capable of understanding the dialectic dynamism of Buddhism, but that he follows dualism; and that his appeal to youth is simply the classical and traditional subversion of minors. Regretfully, I believe that I have detected the possibility of an unpublished system which is relatively creative in the sense that the application of Chinese perspective to the dimension of time in the west would produce results which could not be predicted. This makes Lemaître's system even simpler. It is no more than neo-Sorelianism. I have looked all over the place. Through the frequent use of Lenin as a witness to his arguments, and the loan of the origin of these perspectives from Fichte, instead of acknowledging Sorel as the inventor of them, it is shown that Lemaître has





The Adventures of Superman the Situationist Comic from Spur No.2

drawn deeply from Sorel — elsewhere he admits to having read him — , but with no intention of publicly acknowledging this. The Chinese perspective of Lemaître is just as impoverished as Sorelian ideology, whose fate is well known.

Sorel's artfulness lay in having studied the formula of ascendant Christianity, and having transported the belief in the zero point of the future (the end of the world and the opening towards an unknown paradise) to a purely technical system. Thus the Christian end of the world can be replaced by anything: the general strike, the socialist revolution, or to be more up-to-date, the man who presses the button on atomic missiles. All those who don't fit in with this perspective are equally assured of punishment, by using the key formula of all the historic events of our century: the accusation of treachery (to what? the system). In *La Roue de la Fortune*, I set myself against the mythological exactitude's of Benjamin Péret, who is shown so high in Lemaître's estimation. This was because for me all art is an infinite

multitude of mythic creations, and because I oppose free creativity to a return to the belief in a single imposed myth, or system of myths. Here, I oppose the idea of multiple paradises to that cherished by Lemaître: a unique paradise, and ideological carcass once more exhumed. I don't think that Péret's attitude on this subject has ever approached such stupidity as that of Lemaître, but I saw the peril to come: and Péret can no longer protest when Lemaître, who stupidly insulted him in 1952 for 'lack of creation', now depends on him.

In any case, no-one can pay a greater compliment to the situationist movement than this confirmation by Lemaître: "I don't know anyone who believes in the 'situationist group'. The situationists themselves are not situationists as they have written many times To speak of a whole which doesn't exist is to invite the accusation of having invented it." But our sole goal is precisely to invent it. We have invented everything so far, and there is still nearly everything left for us to invent: our terrain is so rich that it scarcely exists.

What we are going to invent is situationist activity itself. And also its definition. Having awkwardly let slip a number of propositions, proposals and appeals in his pamphlet on perfectly unreal footing, Lemaître pretends:

"the situationists and my group could perhaps reach a spiritual understanding on the terrain of the 'situation', however much my critics adhere to my ethical conception of the Creator of elements — superior to the productive constructor of moments of life — and to the vision of integral cultural situations, the outcome of the Creatic — and not simply ludic." I have already shown that we have goals completely opposed to his. All of Lemaître's options are rejected.

In a note (p.80) where he points out to us the importance of Einstein, Lemaître has the audacity to add that "time is a notion intrinsic to the situation". We, however, to the extent that we have advanced in the study of given situationists, we find that the question is posed of inventing a situlogy, a situgraphy and perhaps even a situmetry beyond existing topological knowledge.

Lemaître is amazed that there is a Scandinavian culture distinct from the classical west. Scandinavian culture is above all the culture of the forgotten, the forgotten culture and without history, uninterrupted since the stone age, older and more immobile even than Chinese culture. With such a weighty heritage of oblivion, what could I cite from my ancestors.

I am a man without merit. At the same time, I am wicked enough. Journalists and other professional droogs at the service of the existing order call us a 'beat generation'. They are astonished to discover that their knockbacks, their distrust, their absolute refusal to allow us even the chance to eat as badly as an unemployed unskilled worker, that all this has hardened us to the point that we refuse to give these bruisers big kisses the moment when they find us interesting. I remember the time of the Cobra movement, when C.O.Götz stated that our German comrades had to live on a tenth the keep of any prisoner of the Federal Republic. I know the more than shameful conditions in which the lettrists had to live in order to realise the remarkable works of their creative period. And so it continues. A German artist, whose country will not hesitate to claim the highest glory, has for two years had no other home than the empty railway cars at the station. When I discovered the systematic structures of the situationist tendency, I myself had understood that here

was a method which exploited in secret by us could give us a great direct social power, and which would allow us the luxury of truly avenging the insults. I did not hesitate to explain this view to Guy Debord, who completely refused to take it into consideration, which obliged me to make my remarks public. He then told me that it was necessary to leave such methods to people like Pauwels and Bergier, and the mystical old women who are enraptured by minor occult insights. Everyone dreams of marketing its echoes, as Gurdijieff did to his *well-to-do* disciples. After some reflection, I knew that I would arrive at exactly the same attitude, which is the same vein as all my behaviour up till now; anyway it is the reason for our collaboration in the S.I.

But, "my hesitation could be conceived as the idea of surrendering the secret of secrets, the creation of creation, to the incoherent mob" Lemaître writes (p.7), which all the more defends his right to the secret, that his 'creatic' nothingness is a matter of a secret of organisation. He justifies himself by the examples of atomic and other secrets. In fact, *secret methods transform art into craftsmanship*, by the exclusive techniques to reproduce to standards which come latter on. Lemaître is a conscious partisan of this survival of the artisan confraternity. One is accepted by producing an acceptable *master-piece*. Thus Lemaître retains a weakness for Debord's first film, simply because he has not understood it. He simply places it icily "amongst the ten best works in *the history of cinema*" This is his emphasis (p.25).

Lemaître also reproaches me for having declared that he is finished. He claims that he is alive. That's true; and I didn't say he was dead. I said that he was *in the coma* (of his system). Which will probably only last as long as he does. The patient appropriation of the secrets of the master — particularly when dealing with a mastership arbitrarily decreed by an individual — clearly guarantees that a very particular commodity can be produced to these standards. But there is no guarantee that this production will be valorised by some desire.

Like Lemaître, I think that Vassili Kandinsky is a man "who has adduced and defined the abstract" (p111). But I don't agree with him that he was an "artistic innovator", nor that I am an abstract painter. I have never made any but anti-abstract paintings following the current of Hans Arp and Max Ernst, followed by Mondrian and Marcel Duchamp. Kandinsky, in *Von Punkt über Linie zur Fleche*, had aligned modern art according to the perspective of Euclidean geometry, whereas the innovators mentioned above moved towards an inverse geometry, aiming towards a polydimensional cosmos at the surface, just as at the line and the point. The technique of *dripping painting* showed the absurdity of Kandinsky's attitude. If you work very close to the canvas, the flow of colours makes surfaces, blotches. But if you arrange things once again at a distance, the colour is divided into little splashes, which only make points. This is exactly like elements in perspective. They start as masses and disappear over the horizon as points. Kandinsky started at the horizon, in the abstract to arrive where? Me, I started in the immediate present, to arrive where?

4

"The thoughts and observations about it are entirely new; the citations have not been made before; the subject is of extreme importance and has been treated with infinite arrangement and clarity. It has cost me a great deal of time, and I pray that you will accept it and consider it as the greatest effort of my genius."

— Jonathan Swift,
Irrefutable Essay on the Faculties of the Soul.

If, as Lemaître says, time was an extraneous notion to the situation, situlogy will be as much a study of the unique of the identical form, as morphology. But it could rightly be said that situlogy is a morphology of time, since everyone is agreed that topology is defined as the study of *continuity* which is the non-division in extension (space) and the non-interruption in duration. The morphological side of situlogy is included in this definition: that which concerns the intrinsic properties of figures without any relation to their environment.

The exclusion of singularities and interruptions, the constancy of intensity and the unique feeling of the propagation of the processes, which defines a situation, also excludes the division in several times, which Lemaître pretends are possible. But the confusion of ideas by an unlettered person like Lemaître is much more pardonable than that which prevails amongst professional topologists; and which obliges us to distance ourselves from the purely topological terrain to invent a more elementary situlogy. This confusion is introduced precisely in the formula of orientability which, in reality, is only adaptation to the dimension of time. E.M. Patterson explains that "the idea of orientablity derives from the physical idea that a surface could have one or two sides. Let us suppose that around each point of a surface — with the exception of the points at the edge (boundary), if there are any — a little closed curve is drawn in a defined sense, whether in the sense of rotation of the hands of a watch or in the contrary sense, having been attached to this point. At this moment, the surface is called orientable if it is possible to choose the sense of the curves, of the manner to which it would be the same for all the points sufficiently close to each other. If not the surface is called non-orientable. All surfaces with only one side are non-orientable."

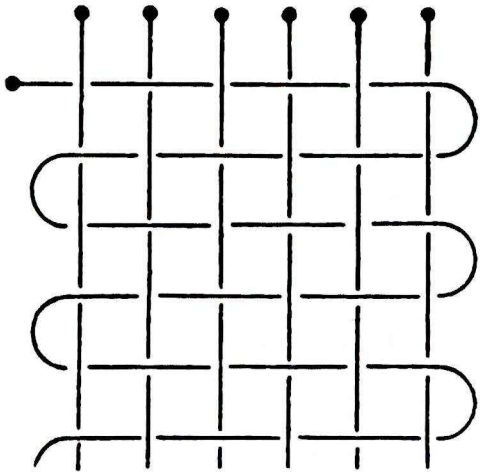
This mixture of geometry and physics is quite out of order. It is easy to prove that a sphere only has one surface, and likewise a ring. That a cone possesses two surfaces and a cylinder three, etc. but logically a surface can only have one side.

Anyway, a surface with two sides is not topological, because there is a rupture in continuity. But the reason for which we are put on the false scent of the double surface with two sides is clear: it's because that's what allows the linkage of topology with the general tendency of geometry: *the search for equalities*, or equivalencies. Two figures are explained as being topologically equivalent, or homeomorphs, if each can be transformed into the other by a continuous deformation. This is to say that there is a single figure in transformation: situlogy is the transformative morphology of the unique.

The gravest error which was introduced by adapting the classic perspective of geometry to topology, is the adaptation to classic distinctions of geometry following the number of co-ordinates in linear topology, the topology of surfaces and the topology of volumes. This is impossible and ridiculous if elementaries of situlogy are understood, because in topology there is a precise equivalence between a point, a line, a surface and a volume whereas in geometry there is an absolute distinction. This confusion is clearly reflected in the Moebius strip, which is said to possess "two surfaces without homeomorphy" or to represent "surfaces with a single side" without a back or front, without an inside or outside. This phenomenon can even lead people to imagine that the Moebius strip only possesses a single dimension, which is completely absurd, because a Moebius strip cannot be made with a piece of string, even less with a line. What is most interesting about the Moebius strip is exactly the relationship between the two lines of the parallel edges.

It is possible to study geometric equivalencies, congruences and likenesses of a Moebius strip, if a particular fact is taken into account: the length of a Moebius strip could be infinite compared to its width, but cannot be short than a particular calculable proportion compared to this width. It's up to the mathematicians to construct and calculate the Moebius strip at its minimal limit. Once constructed, it would be found that we are dealing with an object where the line which marks the width of the strip at a point taken by chance, makes a perfect right angle with same line drawn on the opposite part of the strip, however these two same lines are parallel, if the strip is smoothed into a cylinder. The same line which at one point represents the horizontal at another point represents a vertical. There are thus three spatial dimensions, apart from the space if the strip is not flattened. Hence the strangeness of the Moebius strip. Two Moebius strips of this type can thus always be put into likeness, and with the same width of strip, put into congruence.

It seems that no-one has yet remarked on the strange behaviour of all the topological forms and figures in their relationship with the system of spatial co-ordinates (vertical, horizontal, depth) in which they play, making them be born and disappear, and transforming one into the other. For Euclidean geometry, the system of co-ordinates is a given basis. For situlogy, no, as it creates and disposes of the co-ordinates at will. Thus Euclidean geometry has a duty to go beyond all situlogical considerations to take as a point of reference the system of co-ordinates at right angles which is the schema of the law of least effort. René Huygues shows, in his work *Art and Man*, that it is with the development of metallurgy, after the agrarian epoch, that the division is produced between the two styles of Hallstadt and La Tene, which is none other than the division between geometric and situlogic



thought. Through the Dorians geometric thought was implanted in Greece, giving birth to rationalist thought. The contrary tendency wound up in Ireland and Scandinavia.

Walter Lietzman notes, in his book *Anschauliche Topology*: "In art, for example in the age of the Vikings, knotwork was used as ornamentation with pleasure. I have before me a photo of the knot gardens of Shakespeare at Stratford, in which the arrangement of flowers in the form of knots is shown . . . What does Shakespeare see in these knots? I'm not able to say. Perhaps its a mater of some error or more a deliberate confusion with the theme of the labyrinth. The question is raised twice with him: In *Midsummer Night's Dream* (act II, scene 1), and in *The Tempest* (Act III, scene 3)."

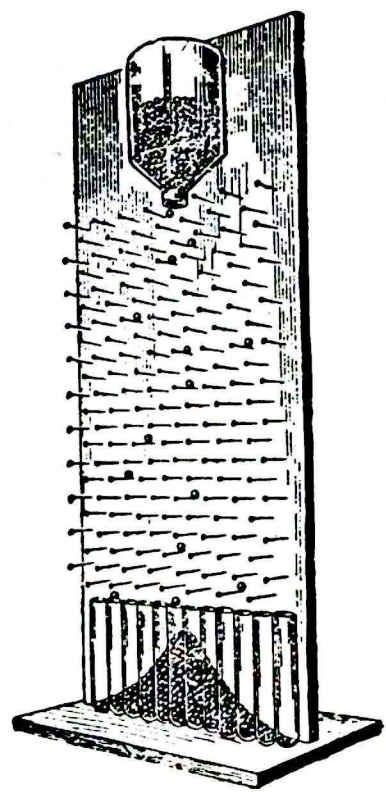
There is no possible mistake. James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, by pronouncing the absurd phrase "No sturm, no drang", had overcome the ancient conflict between classicism and romanticism and opened a *ski-slope* towards the reconciliation of passion and logic. What is needed today is a thought, a philosophy and an art which conforms to what is projected by topology, but this is only realisable on condition that this branch of modern science is returned to its original course: that of "the situ analysis" or situlogy. Hans Findeisen, in his *Shamanentum*, indicated that the origins of shamanism, which still survives amongst the Lapps, are to be found in the cave paintings of the ice age, and it is enough that the ornamentation which characterises the Lapp presence is simple knotwork. The knowledge of secret topologies has always been indicated by the presence of signs of knots, strings, knotwork, mazes etc. And in a curious way since antiquity the weavers have transmitted a revolutionary teaching in forms which are more or less bizarre, mystifying and subverted. A history too well known to have been studied seriously. The perversion in that should be noticed rather than the reverse.

The relation that the writings of Max Brod established between Kafka and the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe is as profound as the relationship between Shakespeare and Hamlet: and their presence at Prague which, since the time of La Tene radiated topological thought, is as natural as the astonishing results that Kepler could extract from the calculations of Brahe, by adapting them to the methods of geometry and classical mathematics, which was impossible for Tycho Brahe himself. This shows once more that topology remains the source of geometry, and that the contrary process is impossible. This indicates the impossibility of explaining the philosophy of Kierkegaard as a consequence of the philosophy of Hegel. The influence of Scandinavian thought in European culture is incoherent and without permanent results, like a true thought of the absurd. That there has always been a Scandinavian philosophical tradition, which structures the tendency of Ole Roemer,

H.C. Oersted Carl von Linne etc., completely distinct from English pragmatism, German idealism and French rationalism is a fact which can only be astonishing in that it has always been kept secret. With the Scandinavians themselves ignoring the base logic of this profound and hidden coherence, it is as much ignored by others. I have the greatest mistrust of all the ideas on the benefits of learning. However in the actual situation in Europe it seems to me that an ignorance of this subject presents a danger. Thus I consider that the fact that Swedenborg and Novalis had been mine engineers is more important than the chance postulates of such as Jaspers which allowed the label of mad schizophrenics to be stuck on their backs. This is not because this is a fact which could be established in a scientific manner, but because it is a basic skill of topological thought, like that of weavers, and this fact could lead us to the precious observations for the founding of situlogy.

But all this is only presented as a possible technique subordinated to the work of the S.I., the allies and enemies of which can easily be seen. The situationists reject with the greatest of hostility the proposal arising in Bergier and Pauwels' book, *The Dawn of Magic*, which asks for help in setting up a proposed institute to research occult techniques; and the formation of controlling secret society reserved for those today who are in a position to manipulate the various conditions of their contemporaries. We would not in any case collaborate with such a project, and we have no desire to help it financially.

"From all evidence, equality is the basis of geometric measurement" as Gaston Bachelard said in *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique*. And he informs us: "When Poincaré had shown the logical equivalence of various geometries, he stated that the geometry of Euclid would always be the most useful, and that in case of conflict between this geometry and physical experience, it was always preferable to change physical theory than change the elementary geometry. Thus Gauss had pretended to experiment astronomically with a theorem of non-Euclidean geometry: He wondered if a triangle located in the stars, and hence of



This apparatus allows Gauss's curve to be automatically traced (from the position of the ball bearings at the bottom). The artistic problems of the derive are situated at the level of the relatively unforeseen trajectories of each ball bearing.

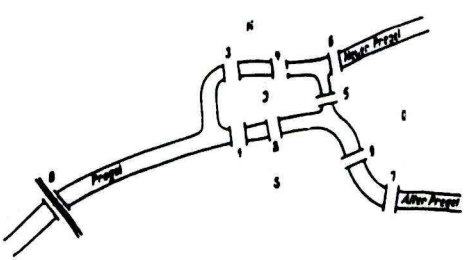
enormous surface, would show the shrinking of surface indicated by the geometry of Lobatchowski. Poincaré did not recognise the crucial character of such an experience."

The point of departure of situgraphy, or of plastic geometry, must be *Situ analysis* developed by Poincaré, and pushed in an egalitarian direction under the name topology. But all talk of equalities is openly excluded, if there aren't at least two elements to equalise. Thus the equivalence teaches us nothing about the unique or the polyvalence of the unique, which is in reality the essential domain of situ analysis, or topology. Our goal is to set a plastic and elementary geometry against egalitarian and Euclidean geometry, and with the help of both to go towards a geometry of variables, playful and differential geometry. The first situationist contact with this problem is seen in Galton's apparatus that experimentally produced Gauss's curve (see the figure in the first issue of *Internationale Situationiste*) [reproduced above. Ed]. And even if my intuitive fashion of dealing with geometry is completely anti-orthodox, I believe that a road has been opened, a bridge thrown across the abyss which separates Poincaré and Gauss as far as the possibility of combining geometry with physics without renouncing the autonomy of the one from the other.

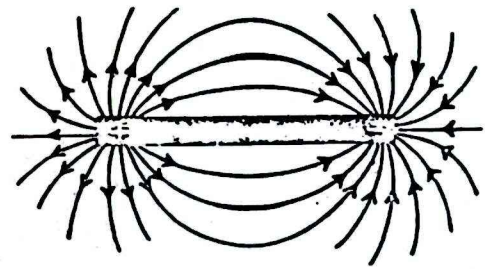
All the axioms are cut offs against the non-desired possibilities, and by this fact contains a voluntary illogical decision. The illogic which interests us at the base of Euclidean Geometry is played between the following axes: — things which are superimposed upon each other are equal; — the sum is greater than the part. — This absurdity is seen, for example, the moment that we start to apply the definition of a line as length without breadth.

If two lines are superimposed, one equals the other. This must result in either two parallel lines (which shows that the equality is not perfect and absolute, or that the superimposition is neither) or the union of the lines in a single line. But if this line is longer than a single line, or if it has acquired width, the lines would not be equal. but if the lines are absolutely equal, the whole is not bigger than the part. This is a indisputable logic, but if it is true, we are in an absurdity because geometric measurement is precisely based on the axiom that the whole is greater than the part.

The idea that two equal lengths are identical is found in geometric measurement. But two things can never be identical, because then we would say they were the same thing. If a murderer must be identified to a judge, it isn't enough that this is an individual who looks exactly like the person who committed the crime. The identical twin will not do in these circumstances. It is certain that there are no equalities, no repetitions, as in the case of the Konigsberg bridges. In Geometry, an identity of length and position excludes all quantitative consideration. But how is it possible through superimposition to reduce the infinite number of lines of equal length to one line, which is no bigger than any single line of these; in such a case where it is unthinkable to divide a line



in two, are both equal to the divided line?



If a line is moved from its position, at the same time it remains in its position, a surface has been created rather than two lines. The superimposition, which shows that the two lines are equal, can not be practised without the duality disappearing: otherwise they could not be equalised. A single line is equal to nothing. This proves that there is no reality in the absolute idealism of Euclid's formula that a line has no thickness.
The proof by superimposition is impossible, even if the process is modernised by employing the formula of congruence, or an identity of form, but still excepting spatial position.
We can reduce a thousand points to a single point by superimposition, and this point is equal to one of the thousand points. But a point cannot be multiplied and left at the same place, and displaced at the same time. This would be a line. As for volume, these can only be superimposed in the imagination. It could only be achieved with two phantom volumes without real volumes. This abstract character is at once the strength and weakness of Euclidean Geometry. The slightest abstraction in topology is only a weakness.
A thousand times zero is only zero, and nothing can be abstracted from zero. Euclidean geometry is used in this irreversible and unilateral sense: it's oriented. And all the geometries, apart from situgraphy, are the same as it. Orientation is a linear concept, and a vector is also called a half-vector, because it also signifies the distance covered, and the sense in which this has been chosen, is called its positive sense. The zero point, chosen at some point on the line is fixed as a point of commencement. An oriented straight line is thus not a line in itself, but the combination of a line and a point. A oriented plane is a plane in which is chosen a sense of rotation called direction, and this plain is also linked to a point, the centre of rotation, which could allow the establishment of an axe of rotation at rights angles to the plane of rotation.
Space is oriented as there is a sense of rotation associated around each axis of space, called the direct sense of space. This Installation allows everything that can be called measurement. But of what does measure consist? This is the most curious thing about this business. All the measures of equal units whether of length, of size, height, mass time or whatever unit derived from these basic notions, consists of their indication by on a half-line, a spatial demi-dimension divided into equal intervals oriented from a point of origin towards to infinity. This half-line does not need to be straight, but could be inscribed on the circumference of a circle. If the extension makes several revolutions these become the distances of a greater linear or circular extension. Here is the principle to which all possible measure arrives in the final analysis. Any measure cannot explain whatever may be outside of this limit of a development along a demi-line.

Euclidean and analytical Geometry were developed within its classical discourse, itself following the orientation of a demi-line. Starting with a point without spatial dimension, this is moved forward and so traces a line. The line is moved forward in a direction perpendicular to its extension to produce a surface, with which the same process is used to create a volume. But this oriented movement, which from a point produces a line, a surface, a volume, this movement in itself does not enter into geometric considerations in its relations with spatial dimension. The inconsistency is evident. The act of superimposition is also impossible without movement, but from the moment when all the necessary movements to establish classical geometry are put on trial, purely spatial phenomena can no longer be spoken of, and nevertheless movement is there from the beginning. We can wonder whether time has only a single dimension, or whether in the future we might not be obliged to apply to time at least three dimensions to be able to arrive at more homogenous explanations of what has happened. That remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: time cannot be reduced to a demi-dimension or to an oriented length with a measuring instrument. We thus also reach another questions as to whether what we know as 'time' in its scientific definition, as a measure of duration, and the form under which time enters relativity theory, isn't simply the notion of orientation or the demi-line.

Oriented geometry can, thanks to its orientation, ignore the notions of time inherent to its system. But, in order to take consciousness of the role of time and of its real role in relation to the three spatial dimensions, we are obliged to abandon the path of orientation by the demi-line, and to found a unitary homeomorphism.

When we want to use the expression *dimension*, we are immediately faced with the problem of its exact interpretation and definition. A dimension can be defined in a logical fashion as an extension without beginning or end, neither sense nor orientation, an infinity, and it's just the same with the infinity in the dimension of time. This is eternity. The extension of one of the three spatial dimensions represents a surface, an extension without beginning or end. If the system of linear measurement can only measure the demi-line, the system of measurement from two co-ordinates at right angles can only give a measure of space for figures drawn in a quarter of a surface, and the information of 3D measurements are even poorer as they drawn within an eighth of a sphere from the angle of measure of 90° of three oriented co-ordinates in the same direction. To avoid this perpetual reduction of knowledge, we shall proceed in the inverse sense.

For the witness of a crime, identification is to define the suspect as the possible unique. But homeomorphism poses us various problems. It could easily be viewed a follows: now it is no longer a matter of identifying the assassin, but the poor victim that the brute has voluntarily ridden over several times with their motor car. They have an aspect which differs in a tragic way from the fellow that was known during their life. Everything is there, but crudely rearranged. They are not the same, yet it is still them. Even in their decomposition they can be identified. Without doubt. It is the field of homeomorphism, the variability within unity.

Here the field of situlogical experience is divided into two opposed tendencies, the ludic tendency and the analytical tendency. The tendency of art, *spinn* and the game, and that of science and its techniques. The creation of variabilities within a unity,

and the search for unity amongst the variations. It can be clearly seen that our assassin has chosen the first way, and that the identifiers must take up the second, which limits the domain to the analysis of sites, or topology. Situlogy, in its development, gives a decisive push to the two tendencies. For example, take the network represented by Galton' apparatus. As a pintable, it can be found in most of the Paris bistros; and as the possibility of calculated variability. it is the model of all the telephone networks.

But this is the creative side, which precedes the analytical side in general and elementary situlogy: *the situationists are the crushers of all existent conditions*. Thus we are going to start our demonstration by returning to the method of our criminal. But to avoid making this affair a bloody drama, we shall dive head long into a perfectly imaginary and abstract world, like Euclid.

We start by lending an object a perfect homeomorphism, an absolute and practically inexistent quality, like the absence of spatial extension that Euclid gives to his point. We give absolute plasticity to a perfectly spherical ball with a precise diameter. It can be deformed in any way without being broken or punctured. Our goal is clear before this object of perfect three dimensional symmetry. We are going to completely flatten it to transform it into a surface with two dimensions and to find the key to their homeomorphic equivalence. We are going to reduce the height of this sphere down to zero in ten equal stages, and calculate the level of increase of the two corresponding dimensions to the at the registered reductions of the third progressively as the ball is transformed more and more into a surface. The last number can be deduced from the preceding nine. It is evident that we don't end up at infinity, as the same process with a ball five times as large must give a surface at least five times as big, and two infinities with a difference of measurable dimensions is beyond logic (except for Lemaître when he speaks of eternity). The practical work of calculation linked to this experiment, we shall leave to the mathematicians — if they have nothing better to do.

We haven't finished. We choose a diagonal in this immense pancake without thickness, and start to lengthen the surface in exactly the same way as in the previous experiment, to end up with a line without thickness, making the calculations in a similar fashion. Thus we have the homeomorphic equivalence expressed as numbers between an object in three, two and one dimension, and the

whole world can start to protest. The most intelligent will be patient, saying that Euclid started with a point. How is this immense line reduced to a single point? I can only return to the sphere. If the situlogy was a uniquely spatial and positional phenomena this will be true.

Einstein has explained that if a line can reach the speed of light, it will contract until it disappears completely as regards the length along the direction of the trip. However a clock would stop all together at that speed. This is what we are going to do. The whole matter is settled in this way. The only minor inconvenience of this spectacular process is invisible: I cannot regain possession of my point which flies off across the universe. If I could transform this movement across space into rotation in place, I would have more or less mastered my point.

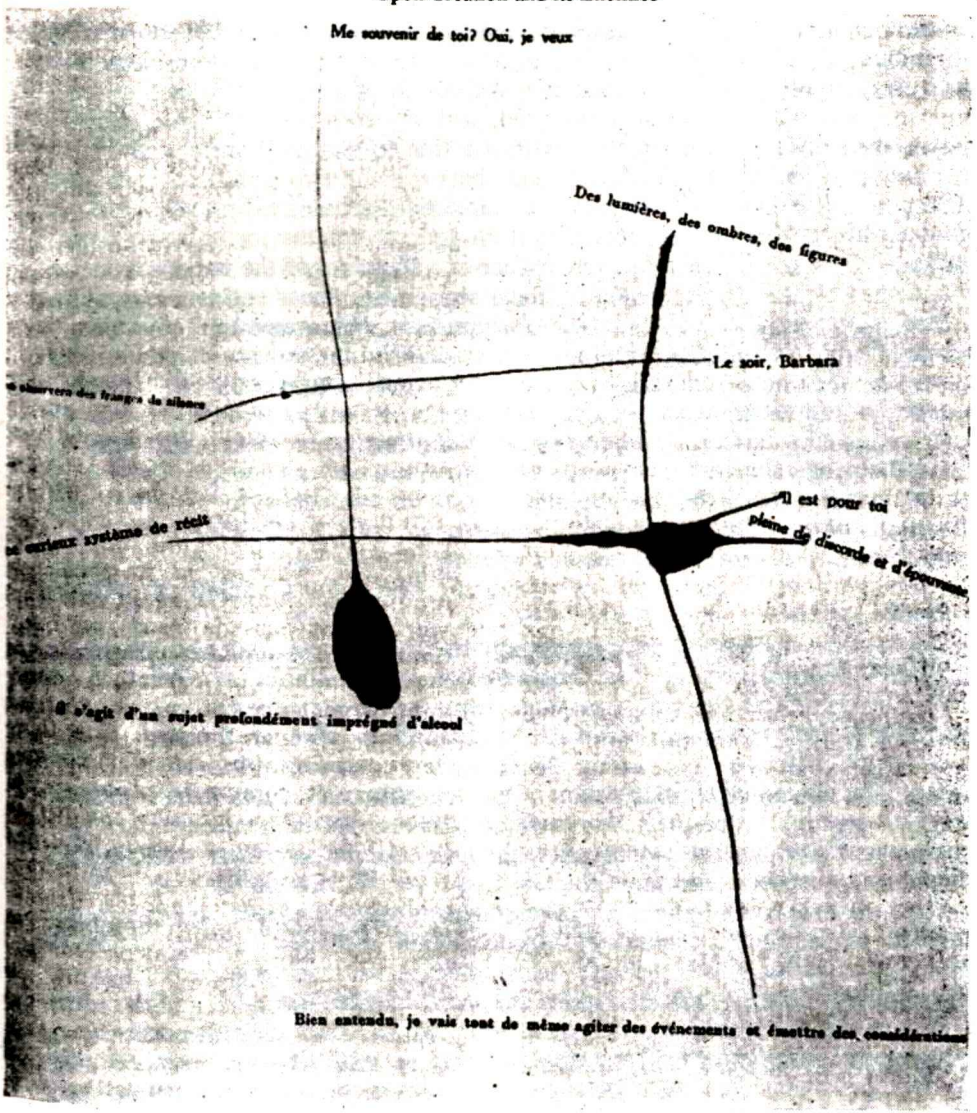
Einstein declared the 'space and time conceived separately have become empty shadows, and only the combination of both expresses reality". It is from this observation that I'm going to clarify the Euclidean point, which possesses no dimensions and, as it is within space, before however representing any other dimension, at least represents the dimension of time introduced into space. And it is all the more impossible to fix a point without duration in space. Without duration there is no position.

But in order that this point can possess the quality of time, it must possess the quality of movement, and as the geometric point cannot be displaced in space without making a line, this movement must be *rotational*, or spinning around itself. Although this movement must be continued, it does not however have an axis nor spatial direction; and what's more vortex cannot occupy the least space. If this definition of the point is richer and more positive than that of Euclid, it does not seem to be less abstract. But since I have learnt that there is a Greek geometer, Héron, who inspired Gauss with a definition of the straight line as a line which turns around itself as an axis without the displacement of any of the point which compose it; and that plenty of people agree that this is the only positive thing which has ever been said on the subject of the straight line, I feel I'm on the right track.

But an axis can only have a rotation in a sense. It is necessary to stop it to spin it in the contrary sense. However a point in rotation, by a continuous change of its axis of rotation, could be led to a rotation in a contrary sense, whatever the sense. In this way the straight line can be explained thus: If two points rotating at random are connected, they are obliged to spin in the same sense and with the same speed, the faster being braked and the slower accelerated.

All the points of a line acquire a presence in the spatial dimension equivalent to their loss of freedom of movement, which has become oriented in space.

If we want to stay with this oriented and positive definition of the line on our backs, a plastic definition is needed. To understand this, it is necessary to remind ourselves that plastic geometry does not place the accent on the infinite character of dimensions, but on their character of a *presence in general space and time*, which could be finite or infinite, but which are primarily in relation with all the objects whose extension is wanted to be studied. Each volume, each surface, each segment of line or piece of time makes a part, or is extracted from the general mass of universal space and time. In the analysis, for example, of a linear segment in the egalitarian geometry of Euclid, abstractions of an 'infinite' character are made of


Me souvenir de toi? Oui, je veux
Des lumières, des ombres, des figures
Le soir, Barbara
Il est pour toi
Il s'agit d'un sujet profondément imprégné d'alcool
Bien entendu, je vais tout de même agiter des événements

"Common sense views a commodty simply as a commodity, instead of seeing it as a crystallised moment in the class struggle; it views the defects of commodities simply as defects rather than seeing in them the result of the conflict of the worker with himself, of the worker with exploitation".
Pierre Chaulieu (Paul Cardan) *"On the Content of Socialism"*, (*Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No.22)

the line. A piece is cut away by forgetting the rest. In unitary geometry, this is not possible. A line is not an uninterrupted series of points, because *the points have lost something in order to be able to establish a line*. In a segment of a line, there are

only two points which could be observed, the two points at each end of the line. But how is it explained that on a line segment there are two rather than a single zero point? The only possible explanation is that a line segment with two zero points is composed of two demi-lines superimposed, with the zero points crossed, going in opposite directions. A line segment is thus a line to double distances, there and back, and *of a length double the distance* between the two polarised ends or in counterpoint. This is a basis for plastic or dialectical geometry. From this outlook, each determined volume is a volume within general volume, or universal space, fragmented by a surface: just as each surface is a fragment of the universal surface distinguished by some lines; and each linear section is a linear segment determined by some points; and each point a moment within time, determined by its duration.

The specific surface which determines a volume, the voluminous surface is termed the vessel, form etc. And as a function of separation between two volumes it possesses the character of an opposition between the inside and outside; similarly the separation of a surface by a line opposes before and after, and so also the point on a line distinguishes the positive and negative sense of a distance. These signs thus only make sense as the relation between two dimensional systems, in the same combination of co-ordinates. The problem becomes more complex when we start to play with several co-ordinate systems in relation with each other such that it could be termed projective geometry, of which the best known example is central perspective.

In order to better understand not only the system of projections, but also the system of objectification in general it is necessary to see how the co-ordinate systems unfold and which is the initial primary system. The primary system of all observation is the system of co-ordinates inherent to the observer themselves, their subjective co-ordinates. Ordinarily this elementary requisite for observation is ignored. The co-ordinates of the individual are known as front, behind, above, below, left and right; and they play an enormous role for orientation, not only in science, but of a primordial way in ethics, the social orientation where the individual is drawn to the left and then the right, toppling forwards, always forward thanks to progress, pushed from behind and pressed towards the ascent and the higher pathways, to finally be carried underground. The direction to the right is the direction of least resistance, of the right line, the direction said to be just or rational; and opposed to it, the left is by nature the anarchic direction of the game, of the *spinn* or of the greatest effort. But each time that the political left becomes the direction of a development of justice, following the path of least resistance, this opposition lacks tension. The trajectory of descent is delineated by the path of least resistance. So, from our outlook of oppositions, the left direction of the left, that of games, must represent the ascent. This is what I have tried to prove with the reversal of dialectics. In the Scandinavian languages the word *droite* (German *recht*, English *right*) mean ascension (högre) towards the heights, which symbolises the left elsewhere. The confusion in social orientation in Europe and in its vocabulary gains from being so rich and contradictory in this respect. These are purely objective observations, without any pragmatic consequence, but which have had an influence even on the most elementary religious conceptions (heaven - fire).

In reality the metric graduations of a co-ordinate system allow the establishment of

a network of parallel lines of co-ordination at equal intervals. The zero point and the positive directions can be chosen and changed in the system as is desired thanks to this squaring up. It is the same thing for the line and for the system of three co-ordinates.

When the system of co-ordinates of an observed object is displaced in relation to the basic system of co-ordination for observation and measure, this sometimes necessitates projection. The projective geometry thus shows the rules of the relations between two or several systems of co-ordination, *as if there were two or several spaces*. In this way, the same space can be multiplied into several by projection. But this is only justified through the time dimension.

However, positive geometry, which works with the demi-line, the quarter surface and the eighth of volume, allows another purely spatial game. The right angle formed by the two negative demi-lines of a co-ordination in two dimensions can be displaced and put in opposition to the positive angle, thus establishing, for example a square. This operation explains how the square could find its explanation in the in the relationship between the circumference and the diagonal of a circle, even though the circle cannot be defined as a derivative of the square. This definition of the square by juxtaposition joins out dialectic definition of the line, and shows how situlogy is more immediate than geometry which always runs into the problem of squaring the circle.

Here we have roughly sketched out some consequences of the disorder which situlogy could introduce to geometric thought, but it is evident to those who know this material, that the consequences will not be any the less as regards our physical and mechanical conceptions. It has already been understood by Einstein's definition that the notion we have of light doesn't lend itself to any spatial dimension. However it would be wrong to consider light as being immaterial. Even the old mystical notion of the four elements could be reconsidered. We know that they don't exist as absolute phenomena, but it is however strange that modern science has refused to consider a distinction of matter as pronounced as that between solid, liquid, gaseous objects and light. When an ice cube suddenly melts and stretches on the surface of a table, it can be concluded that the liquid state represents the loss of one of the spatial dimensions, replaced by a liberation of discharge; that the liquid is a matter of two spatial dimensions. And the constant of tensions of surface tension seems to be as important in physics as the constant of the speed of light. The logical conclusion this gives rise to, is that gases have only one dimension, compensated for by the play of their movement. And for an example of something which has even less dimensions, think of Maurice Lemaître and his friends.

Manifesto

Internationale Situationniste 4

June 1960

The existing framework cannot subdue the new human force that is increasing day by day alongside the irresistible development of technology and the dissatisfaction of its possible uses in our senseless social life.

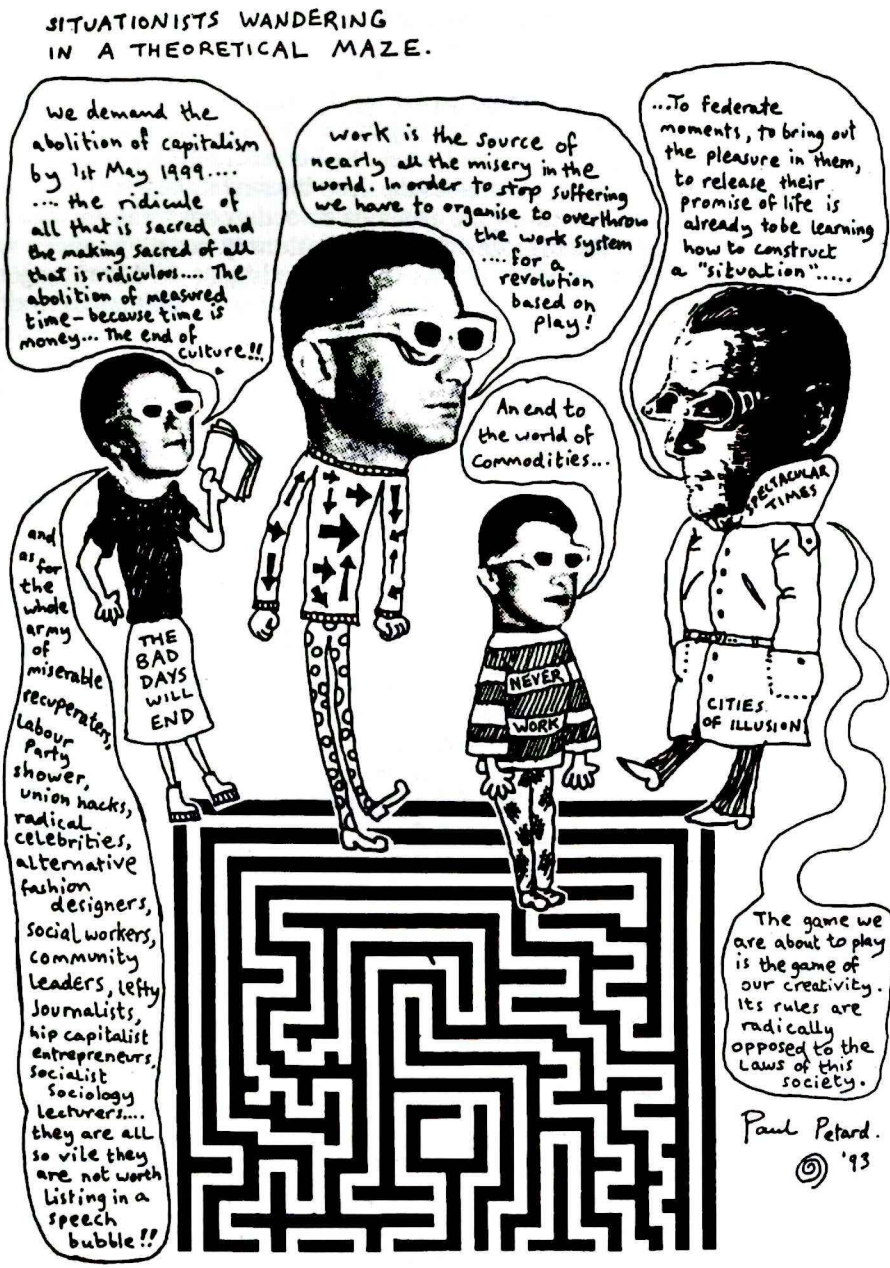
Alienation and oppression in this society cannot be distributed amongst a range of variants, but only rejected en bloc with this very society. All real progress has clearly been suspended until the revolutionary solution of the present multiform crisis.

What are the organisational perspectives of life in a society which authentically "reorganises production on the basis of the free and equal association of the producers"? Work would more and more be reduced as an exterior necessity through the automation of production and the socialisation of vital goods, which would finally give complete liberty to the individual. Thus liberated from all economic responsibility, liberated from all the debts and responsibilities from the past and other people, mankind will exude a new surplus value, incalculable in money because it would be impossible to reduce it the measure of waged work. The guarantee of the liberty of each and of all is in the value of the game, of life freely constructed. The exercise of this ludic recreation is the framework of the only guaranteed equality with non-exploitation of man by man. The liberation of the game, its creative autonomy, supersedes the ancient division between imposed work and passive leisure.

The church has already burnt the so-called witches to repress the primitive ludic tendencies conserved in popular festivities. Under the existing dominant society, which produces the miserable pseudo-games of non-participation, a true artistic activity is necessarily classed as criminality. It is semi-clandestine. It appears in the form of scandal.

So what really is the situation? It's the realisation of a better game, which more exactly is provoked by the human presence. The revolutionary gamesters of all countries can be united in the S.I. to commence the emergence from the prehistory of everyday life.

Henceforth, we propose an autonomous organisation of the producers of the new culture, independent of the political and union organisations which currently exist,


SITUATIONISTS WANDERING IN A THEORETICAL MAZE.
we demand the abolition of capitalism by 1st May 1999.... .... the ridicule of all that is sacred and the making sacred of all that is ridiculous.... The abolition of measured time - because time is money... The end of culture!!
work is the source of nearly all the misery in the world. In order to stop suffering we have to organise to overthrow the work system .... for a revolution based on play!
..To federate moments, to bring out the pleasure in them, to release their promise of life is already to be learning how to construct a "situation".....
An end to the world of commodities...
THE BAD DAYS WILL END
NEVER WORK
SPECTACULAR TIMES
CITIES OF ILLUSION
and as for the whole army of miserable recuperators, Labour Party shower, union hacks, radical celebrities, alternative fashion designers, social workers, community leaders, lefty journalists, hip capitalist entrepreneurs, socialist sociology lecturers.... they are all so vile they are not worth listing in a speech bubble!!
The game we are about to play is the game of our creativity. Its rules are radically opposed to the laws of this society.
Paul Petard. '93

Situationists Wandering in a Theoretical Maze
from *Armchair* (No.5, Fall '93)

as we dispute their capacity to organise anything other than the management of that which already exists.

From the moment when this organisation leaves the initial experimental stage for its first public campaign, the most urgent objective we have ascribed to it is the seizure of U.N.E.S.C.O. United at a world level, the bureaucratisation of art and all culture is a new phenomena which expresses the deep inter-relationship of the social systems co-existing in the world on the basis of eclectic conservation and the reproduction of the past. The riposte of the revolutionary artists to these new conditions must be a new type of action. As the very existence of this managerial concentration of culture, located in a single building, favours a seizure by way of putsch; and as the institution is completely destitute of any sensible usage outside our subversive perspective, we find our seizure of this apparatus justified before our contemporaries. And we will have it. We are resolved to take over U.N.E.S.C.O., even if only for a short time, as we are sure we would quickly carry out work which would prove most significant in the clarification of a long series of demands.

What would be the principal characteristics of the new culture and how would it compare with ancient art?

Against the spectacle, the realised situationist culture introduces total participation.

Against preserved art, it is the organisation of the directly lived moment.

Against particularised art, it will be a global practice with a bearing each moment on all the usable elements. Naturally this would tend to collective production which would be without doubt anonymous (at least to the extent where the works are no longer stocked as commodities, this culture will not be dominated by the need to leave traces.) The minimum proposals of these experiences will be a revolution in behaviour and a dynamic unitary urbanism capable to extension to the entire planet, and of being further extended to all habitable planets.

Against unilateral art, situationist culture will be an art of dialogue, an art of interaction. The artists — with all culture visible — have become entirely separated from society, just as they are separated from each other by competition. But faced with this impasse of capitalism, art has remained essentially unilateral in response. This enclosed era of its primitivism must be superseded for a complete communication.

At a higher stage everyone will become an artist, i.e. inseparably a producer-consumer of total cultural creation, which will help the rapid dissolution of the linear criteria of novelty. Everyone will be a situationist so to speak, with a multidimensional inflation of tendencies, experiences, of radically different "schools" — not successively but simultaneously.

We will inaugurate what will historically be the last of the crafts. The role of amateur-professional situationist — of anti-specialist — is again a specialisation up

to the point of economic and mental abundance, when everyone becomes a an "artist", in the sense that the artists have not attained the construction of their own life. However, the last craft of history is so close to the society without a permanent division of labour, that when it appeared amongst the S.I., its status as a craft was generally denied

To those who don't understand us properly, we say with a irreducible scorn: "The situationists of which you believe yourselves perhaps to be the judges, will one day judge you. We await the turning point which is the inevitable liquidation of the world of privation, in all its forms. Such are our goals, and these will be the future goals of humanity."

17th May 1960

Commentary

A brief perusal of what would seem a key document is enough to show why Ken Knabb left this text out of his anthology. The plan to stage a coup at U.N.E.S.C.O. is not the sort of thing which would go down well with the anarchist/pro-situ readership Knabb was trying to attract.

Nevertheless, no matter how comic this scheme may seem, it was certainly outdone by *Capitalist Crisis Studies*, a pro-situ group which broke from *For Ourselves* in 1975. They created a subtle blend of situationist ideas with those of Lyndon La Rouche (Lyn Marcus), calling for the UN General Assembley to be turned into a 'world soviet'.

Whereas the S.I. merely dreamed of everyone becoming situationists (sadly they do not explain what fate would befall those it was necessary to expell), *CCS* planned a global telecommunication scheme which would "monitor and record each person's vital signs and general health parameters on a daily basis, automatically flagging if unusual patterns or danger signals aroe." (*Beyond the Nation State, the World Market, and Blind Development*, CCS 1977)

We include this information not merely to alert how the totalitarian aspects of the S.I. could be asserted after many years. We also want to imply a comprehensive knowledge of the pro-situ genre in this fashion and incidently increase the inflationary price offered for this curious and rather rare pamphlet by documenting its existence.

The London Psychogeographical Association was founded in July 1957 in Cosio d'Arroscia. It swiftly fused with the SituationistInternationalAfter thirty five years of non-existence, it was revived in August 1992 as a completely independent formation. This was celebrated with a cycle trip to the cave at Roisia's Cross at Royston, to coincide with the conjunction of Venus and Jupiter.

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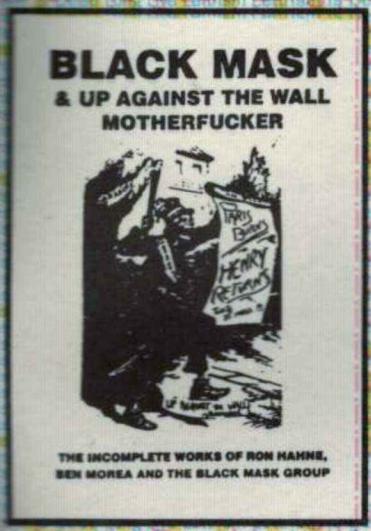

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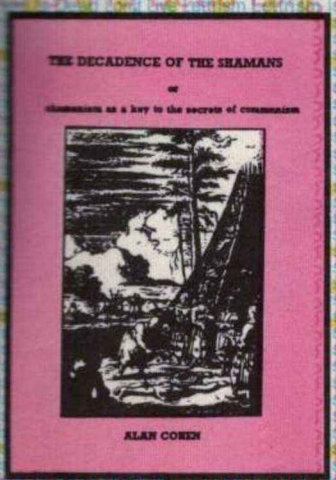
Adrian Henri



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Those of you who thought you had grasped the essence of situationist ideas — think again!

The selection of material previously translated from the Situationniste Internationale has been very partial in order to maintain certain impression of the nature of the group. No longer will such impressions be possible.This translation of a key text **by Asger Jorn**, links the SI with major developments which have taken place in mathematics since 1960.

This text shows how the notion of the *situation* came out of Poincarés **Situ Analysis** (usually translated as Positional Analysis in English). This text has helped the ***London Psychogeographical Association*** develop a deeper understanding as it moves forward with a rigorous analysis more fitting for the nineteen nineties.

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